

Stilwells to Perú

July 2026 - *Building for the Future*



Dear friends and faithful partners,

For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 3:9–11

Greetings from the airport in Lima! In just a few hours, our family will board our flight to begin a three-month furlough in the United States. The past several weeks have been especially full. Ben has traveled to the mountains for ministry opportunities, including a men's retreat and meetings with one of our daughter churches as it continues preparing for independence. Here in Trujillo, we have also enjoyed several encouraging church conversations at Iglesia Bautista Victoria as we look toward the future of the ministry. As we reflect on these busy weeks, we are grateful to see how the Lord continues to strengthen His church, raise up leaders, and prepare His people for the work He has ahead.

Ministry Travels

Last time we wrote, Ben was in northern Peru (Curumuy and Piura) preparing to return home before making another ministry trip to the jungle city of Iquitos. God had other plans.

An Unexpected Delay in Piura

On the day Ben and the seminary students were scheduled to return to Trujillo, a large transportation strike broke out across the region. Major highways were blocked, bringing travel in and out of the city to a standstill. As they attempted to make their way back to Piura, they found themselves in the middle of numerous roadblocks. **During the unrest, their van narrowly avoided several rocks thrown by protesters, Ben was briefly affected by tear gas, and police shot rubber bullets right in front of the van in an effort to disperse the crowds.** The Lord graciously protected the team and brought them safely back to Piura.

The strike continued for five days, delaying their return home. **What initially appeared to be an inconvenience quickly became another opportunity for ministry. Ben was able to preach several more times, encourage believers, and visit a number of members from Iglesia Bautista Victoria who are currently working in Piura.** It was another reminder that even unexpected interruptions are often part of God's perfect plan. And yes, there was one unexpected blessing as well—Ben had the opportunity to enjoy his favorite Peruvian dish, ceviche de conchas negras, not once, but twice!

Huancayo: A Church Ready to Stand

Ben's original plan was to travel to the jungle city of Iquitos for a missionary conference and to encourage young people to consider training at the Peru Baptist Seminary. However, the Lord redirected those plans. Samuel and Fiorella Vega, Victory Baptist Church's

missionaries in the mountain city of Huancayo, invited Ben to begin the process of transitioning El Alfarero Baptist Church (The Potter) from a church plant to an independent local church.

Last weekend, Ben traveled to Huancayo, a city nestled in the Andes at 10,659 feet (3,249 m) above sea level. About fifteen years ago, Samuel and Fiorella were sent out of Victory Baptist Church to plant this congregation. Through God's faithfulness, the church has grown into a healthy, thriving body of believers with faithful leadership and a desire to continue reaching its community.

As the church prepares to become independent, Samuel and Fiorella are prayerfully seeking God's direction toward planting another church. **During his visit, Ben preached, met with the church leaders, and listened as the missionaries shared their vision for the future.** It was an encouraging reminder that one of the greatest joys of missions is seeing churches become established, equipped, and ready to carry on the work of the gospel for generations to come.

Ministry Growth at Iglesia Bautista Victoria

The Lord continues to bless the ministry at Iglesia Bautista Victoria. Over the past year, we have seen steady growth in attendance, ministry involvement, and spiritual maturity. It has been a joy to watch believers faithfully serve one another and take greater ownership of the work of the local church.

As the church grows, so do the opportunities to minister. **Our Biblical Counseling Center continues to expand as more individuals and families seek biblical answers to life's struggles.** We are thankful to see church members becoming increasingly involved in discipleship, counseling, and caring for one another through God's Word.

Please also pray as we seek the Lord's wisdom about adding a co-pastor to help shepherd the growing congregation. We are thankful for the men God has raised up within the church and ask that He would continue to provide faithful leaders to serve His people.

This week has been an exciting time for our children's ministries. **Our church hosted a week of Vacation Bible School along with a new Mom's Circle, designed to build relationships with mothers in our community while their children participate in Bible lessons, games, and activities. We are praying that these ministries will become a bridge into our weekly King's Kids program, which begins again on August 1.** One of our greatest opportunities comes after VBS as our King's Kids workers visit children in their homes, build relationships with their families, and continue sharing the gospel throughout the year.

At the same time, about a dozen of our College and Career young adults will travel to southern Lima to assist our missionaries, Javier and Rosita Huaman, with a week of ministry. Each day the team will conduct two Vacation Bible Schools—one in the morning at one church plant and another in the afternoon at a second church plant. To conclude the week, Ben's father, David Stilwell, will serve as the guest speaker for a weekend Family Conference, encouraging believers to build Christ-centered homes. We are thankful to see

our young adults not only serving within their own church but also partnering with missionaries to strengthen local churches throughout Peru.

As we look at these opportunities, we are reminded that ministry is about far more than adding new programs. It is about equipping God's people, reaching our community with the gospel, and building a strong local church that will faithfully proclaim Christ for generations to come. We are grateful for how the Lord continues to build His church in Trujillo.

Starting Furlough

After nearly two years on the field, our family will be in the United States from August through early November. During that time, we will be visiting many of our supporting churches throughout Ohio, Illinois, and Michigan. If we are scheduled to be at a church near you, we would love the opportunity to see you and thank you personally for your partnership in the gospel.

While we are in the United States, one important priority will be Cameron's urology procedure, scheduled for September 2. We are thankful that this surgery could be scheduled during our furlough and would appreciate your prayers for a successful procedure, smooth recovery, and wisdom for the medical team caring for him.

One of our greatest encouragements as we prepare to leave Peru is knowing that the ministry at Iglesia Bautista Victoria will continue moving forward. The pastors and deacons will continue shepherding the church, and the many ministries of the church will carry on as they have throughout the year. It is a joy to see faithful leaders taking ownership of the work, another evidence that Christ is continuing to build His church.

August	2 – Community Baptist Church – Greer, SC
	9 – First Baptist Church – Petoskey, MI
	16 – Bible Baptist Church – Rantoul, IL
	23 – Fosterburg Baptist Church – Fosterburg, IL
	30 – Riverside Baptist Church – Decatur, IL
September	6 Alaska Baptist Church – Alaska, MI
	13 Nottingham Baptist Church – Nottingham, OH
	20 York Baptist Church – Milan, MI
	27 Faith Baptist Church – Camp Point, IL
October	4 Emanuel Baptist Church – Naperville, IL
	11 North Baptist Church – Flint, MI
	18 First Baptist Church – Troy, MI
	25 Trinity Baptist Church – Muskegon, MI
November	1 First Baptist Church – North Branch, MI

Building for the Future

One of the most exciting developments this year has been the growing vision of Iglesia Bautista Victoria for a permanent church home. As the congregation continues to grow, our current facilities are becoming increasingly limited for the ministries the Lord has entrusted to us.

Rather than simply asking, "How can we fit more people?" the church has been asking, "How can we better serve Trujillo for the next generation?"

We are thankful to share that approximately \$150,000 has already been saved toward the purchase of a future property. Our prayer is to reach \$300,000, which would allow us to purchase land large enough for continued growth and future ministry opportunities. A larger property would not simply provide a new auditorium. It would allow us to expand ministries such as biblical counseling, children's outreach, seminary training, youth activities, community events, and, Lord willing, the children's public library we mentioned earlier. We see this project as an investment in decades of gospel ministry, not simply a construction project.

During our furlough, we will be sharing this vision with many of our supporting churches and asking them to pray with us as we seek the Lord's direction and provision. At the same time, the members of Iglesia Bautista Victoria will also place special emphasis on giving to this project. Our prayer is that these combined efforts will move us significantly closer to our goal and, in the Lord's timing, provide a permanent home for the ministry.

While buildings do not accomplish ministry, they can become valuable tools that allow local churches to reach more people with the gospel and faithfully disciple future generations. As Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 3, we may plant and build, but Jesus Christ alone is the foundation of His church. Our confidence is not in fundraising or construction plans, but in the Lord, who has faithfully provided every step of the way. We trust He will continue to build His church in His perfect timing.

His worshippers,

Ben and Jenn Stilwell

Russell (7), Cameron (6), Benaiah (3), Hadassah (1)

Praises:

- We praise the Lord for His continued protection and ministry opportunities during the unexpected five-day delay in Piura.
- We thank God for the growth and maturity of El Alfarero Baptist Church in Huancayo as it prepares to become an independent local church.
- We rejoice in the continued growth of Iglesia Bautista Victoria and the increasing involvement of faithful church members in ministry.
- We thank the Lord for new opportunities to reach families through children's ministries, biblical counseling, and future outreach projects.

Prayer requests:

- Pray for wisdom as El Alfarero Baptist Church transitions to an independent local church and for Samuel and Fiorella Vega as they seek God's direction for future church planting.
- Pray that the Lord would bless our Vacation Bible Schools, Mom's Circle, King's Kids ministry, and the College & Career missions team serving alongside Javier and Rosita Humana in southern Lima.

- Pray for our upcoming furlough, for safe travels, meaningful visits with supporting churches, and encouragement to the churches we will be serving.
- Pray for Cameron's surgery on September 2, for a successful procedure, a smooth recovery, and wisdom for his doctors.
- Pray that God would continue providing faithful leaders for Iglesia Bautista Victoria, including wisdom regarding a future co-pastor.
- Pray for God's continued provision as we seek to raise the remaining funds needed for a permanent church property in Trujillo.

