

August 22, 2016

Dear Co-laborers with Christ,

In July of 1999, at the age of 21, I was appointed as a career missionary with ABWE. It was the culmination of my childhood dream, young adult vision, and goal of all of my education up to that point. I had surrendered publicly to missions as a 10 year old child at my home church, Grace Baptist Church, which then became my sending church and still is to this day. These 17 years have been eventful, challenging, soul-shaping, and fulfilling. By God's grace, I attended language school from 2001-2002, and arrived in Arequipa, the city where I began working, in September, 2002. While in Arequipa, the Lord used a very weak vessel to help propel the music ministry forward, assist in youth services, and begin a program of children's discipleship. In October of 2003, I moved to the capital city of Lima and began working as a kindergarten teacher at Monterrico Christian School. During my 12 years in Lima, I worked at the school for 9 years and also taught at the Lima Baptist Theological Seminary for 4 years. Additionally, I was involved in discipleship and Bible study ministries that contributed to the growth of God's kingdom. These last two years have been the biggest blessing of all, as the Lord led to begin an evangelistic Bible study with a group of ladies and also with a group of elderly couples. The ministries to these individuals, as well as to the students at the seminary were, without a doubt, the highlights of the time God gave me in Peru.

Around 3-4 years ago, the Lord began stirring in my Spirit and preparing my heart for a big change. I did not know what He had for me and, at first, I was not willing to step out of my comfort zone and even look into making such a change. However, He patiently created growing restlessness within me and then allowed me to face over two years of chronic and debilitating pain that caused me to have to take an extended furlough starting this past December. During that time of forced withdrawal from the field, when I had only the responsibility of recovering my physical health, I was finally able to spend extended periods of time with edifying people at my home church and enjoy the refreshment of fellowship with God's people in God's Word. While my spiritual batteries were recharging, the distance from the field gave me a different perspective and clarity and the Lord made it clear that my time in Peru had come to an end. I questioned a great deal because I did not have an open door through which to step next. As I write this, I still do not have that open door, but I know that the God who brought me this far will show me that open door when the time is right. I have been taking advantage of these months of physical challenge (the recovery process is taking much longer than I ever would have anticipated) to dig deep into God's Word, read edifying books, eat from the spiritual feast that is Sunday School, worship services, and other gathering times of my church family, and renew my connection with my family. This time has been a blessing and I know that God is using it to prepare me for whatever He has in store next. My desire is to use all the gifts I obtained through my years in Peru (theological training, children's ministry, the Spanish language, love of Hispanic people and culture, etc) to continue reaching people in the United States.

Thank you is a phrase often said and I hesitate to use it here because it does not seem significant enough under these circumstances. You, my supporters and friends, home office staff, Board, and everyone else who will receive this letter, have quite literally held me up for the past 17 years. I am humbled beyond words by this. There is not now, nor has there ever been any spiritual super-hero quality to me. I am dust, humbled to be used by my Maker in any way. And yet, He has used me. However, this has been a partnership from the beginning and you have been holding the ropes since July, 1999, and some of you even longer than that. It is

incredibly difficult to step away from this and not know what I am stepping towards, but "we live by faith, not by sight." This is a time when God is showing me an entirely new aspect of what faith is. So, although "thank you" can never be adequate, I thank you. I thank each one of you for your investment in Peru. I thank you for your investment in me. To my dear and precious supporting churches who have been so faithful, it would be my privilege and honor to come to visit each of you one last time and leave with you the faces and names of those carrying on the work in Peru and those dear souls still unbelieving. To my unbelievably wonderful and priceless home church, I could never say how much you mean to me. You have been the best sending church a missionary could ever ask for and that is due in large part to Kevin and Heidi Kolb who led in loving on this missionary. So many of you have individually made an eternal impact through your love and prayers. To my Peru team, thank you for your patience and love in working with me as God worked in me. I love you all. To Steve and Debi, you were my first taste of ABWE family and I will always love you and look up to you as examples of godliness and servanthood. To the ABWE home office staff, trainers, and leaders, you have been there through thick and thin. Your love and servants' hearts are evident in every correspondence and every time I have walked through the doors on that hill. To the ABWE Board, thank you for holding all of us up during what have been some turbulent years. Thank you for providing us with leadership and helping those of us on the field not to feel the waves that you have been navigating through for so long.

This letter is far too long for a letter of resignation, and far too short to express my gratitude. But I must close with the details. Effective October 1, and believing this is the way God is setting before me, I wish to tender my resignation from ABWE, but not from being God's sent one in this world.

With all my love and blessing to each of you,

Rachel Freese