

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

ISAIAH 9:6



Paul & Sandra Bradley

Serving with Cadence International
Cadence.org/Bradley

Dear friends,

In this season when we are all flooded with cards and letters, thank you for taking the time to open and read this letter! My heart is warmed at this very moment as I picture so many of your faces. It's impossible to communicate how grateful we are for all of you who have walked with us in our last 30 years of ministry.

We are excited to share just a few of our highlights this last year. Amid the pandemic, ministry has continued!

MAY

I (Sandra) helped plan and lead a mission-wide four-day quiet retreat, designed to help our Cadence staff slow down and spend some focused time with Jesus. I also crafted a devotional to help them pause and listen to Jesus in new ways. Writing the devotional was a worshipful experience for me, as it gave me lots of time to reflect on the goodness and lovingkindness of God.

Here are a couple of reflections from the participants:

"I appreciated the intentional space to practice quiet. The devotional materials guided me to silent reflection and to be quiet with the Lord."

"Each day's devotional left me in tears as I focused on who God is."

"I loved day two (of the devotional) about seeing beauty in the desert. This past year was a difficult one for us and God was so present and comforting throughout it all."

JUNE

Paul exited his interim role as VP for Field Ministries and handed it over to his successor. Having watched him this last year and a half, I can attest to the ways his leadership provided stability and wisdom for the mission. He has since



stepped into another VP role in which he oversees a variety of aspects within Cadence, including picking up the foreign military ministry mantle again.

OCTOBER

Paul and I have once again teamed up in ministry, something we haven't done since our youth ministry days in England and Germany! We are now both Field Leaders for the missionaries who minister in our Western Pacific region (this includes the West Coast, Alaska, Hawaii, and Idaho). We LOVE caring for and coaching these dear folks who "share the gospel and their lives" (1 Thessalonians 2:8) with our military personnel and their families day in and day out.

We recently led a conference for our people, and it was a delightful time to connect as a team and encourage one another personally, spiritually, and in our ministries.

This is what a few of our folks had to say about the conference:

"One of the highlights of the conference was being together. It was a much-needed gathering with the isolation and cancellations due to the pandemic."

"When I Zoomed with my family a couple of days after the conference, they said I looked and sounded like a new man. . . quite refreshed was I."

NOVEMBER

Paul had the privilege of traveling with the Free Burma Rangers to Syria, a country that is still rife with both internal conflicts and conflict with its neighbor Turkey. Among other things, as the FBR chaplain, he led morning devotionals, and of course, he also spent time fixing vehicles and equipment (that won't surprise those of you who know him!). The team traveled to many different villages where they distributed aid, provided medical care, and put on children's programs. Many people in that region have not yet been able to return to their homes and are living wherever they can find shelter. In one village they visited, the internally displaced people (IDPs) are living in a local school building, with 2–3 families sharing each schoolroom. There are still so many needs in this region of the world.

IN CLOSING

During the holiday season, I always try to carve out moments of quiet—usually early in the morning or late at night—to spend time reflecting on Jesus and what His choice to become human has meant for us today. If you are like me, sometimes you need something to help stir your



thinking in new ways. I have enclosed a short reflection you might use during your own moments of quiet. I pray you'll find it helpful.

Thank you for your partnership and prayers—when you pray or give, you have a direct part in all that we do.

With deep gratitude,
Paul and Sandra



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*My eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared for all
people to see.*

*He is a light that will reveal
salvation to the nations
and bring glory to your people
Israel.*

SIMEON, LUKE 2:30-32, NAMES OF GOD BIBLE

ADVENT REFLECTIONS

John records this short but powerful sentence in his gospel: “Having loved His dear companions, He loved them right to the end.” John 13:1 (MSG)

I can’t seem to get this verse out of my head these days. It amazes me. We are so deeply loved, it’s beyond our comprehension.

*Having loved His dear companions,
He loved them right to the end.*

JOHN 13:1 (MSG)

Sometimes, when theology becomes dry, or Scripture becomes commonplace, we find our hearts moved by stories. I think Jesus knew this too, considering how many stories He wove into His teachings. See what stirs in your heart as you read the following true story which illustrates God’s love for us.

Gregory Boyle is a Jesuit priest and the founder and executive director of Homeboy Industries, a nonprofit designed to help gang members in L.A. find a pathway out of gang life. He tells the following story in his book, *Tattoos on the Heart*:

At Camp Paige, a county detention facility near Glendora, I was getting to know fifteen-year-old-Rigo, who was about to make his first communion. The Catholic volunteers had found him a white shirt and black tie. We still had some fifteen minutes before the other incarcerated youth would join us for Mass in the gym, and I’m asking Rigo the basic stuff about his family and his life. I ask about his father.

“Oh,” he says, “he’s a heroin addict and never really been in my life. Used to always beat my a**”. Fact, he’s in prison right now. Barely ever lived with us.”

Then something kind of snaps in him—an image brings him to attention.

“I think I was in the fourth grade,” he begins. “I came home. Sent home in the middle of the day. Got into some pederasty at school. Can’t remember what. When I got home, my jefito was there. He was hardly ever there. My dad says, ‘Why they send you home?’ And cuz my dad always beat me, I said, ‘If I tell you, promise you don’t hit me?’ He just said, ‘I’m your father. ‘Course I’m not gonna hit you.’ So, I told him.”

Rigo is caught short in the telling. He begins to cry, and in moments he’s wailing and rocking back and forth. I put my arm around him. He is inconsolable. When he is able to speak and barely so, he says only, “He beat me with a pipe . . . with . . . a pipe.”

When Rigo composed himself, I ask, “And your mom?” He points some distance from where we are to a tiny woman standing by the gym’s entrance.

“That’s her over there.” He pauses for a beat, “There’s no one like her.” Again, some slide appears in his mind, and a thought occurs.

“I’ve been locked up for more than a year and a half. She comes to see me every Sunday. You know how many buses she takes every Sunday—to see my sorry a**?”

Then quite unexpectedly he sobs with the same ferocity as before. Again, it takes him some time to

reclaim breath and an ability to speak. Then he does, gasping through his tears. “Seven buses. She takes . . . seven . . . buses. Imagine.”

How then, to imagine, the expansive heart of this God—who takes seven buses, just to arrive at us. We settle sometimes for less than intimacy with God when all God longs for is this solidarity with us. In Spanish, when you speak of your great friend, you describe the union and kinship as being *de uña y mugre*—our friendship is like the fingernail and the dirt under it . . .

The desire of God’s heart is immeasurably larger than our imaginations can conjure . . . “Behold the One beholding you and smiling.” It is truly hard for us to see the truth that disapproval does not seem to be part of God’s DNA. God is just too busy loving us to have any time left for disappointment.

The part in the story about the seven buses. . . it does me in every time. Somehow, this image finds its way into the cracks of my heart that sometimes wonders if the gospel is as good as I hope it to be.

Henri Nouwen writes, “The question is not ‘How am I to love God?’ but ‘How am I to let myself be loved by God?’ God is looking into the distance for me, trying to find me, and longing to bring me home.”

Jesus’ willingness to become human and lay aside His divinity speaks volumes of His love and His solidarity with us. He’s been where we are, and He has not left us alone—not then, and not now.

Breathe deeply and know that you are seen. You are loved. And you are not alone.



*Our God is a God of seven buses,
the One who traveled from heaven to
earth to show us we are His beloved.*

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