



Katia Rocks

Link Letter no. 31 | October 2025

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Location: Florianópolis, Brazil



What I do: Through a church I helped start, I encourage people, particularly women, to connect with Christ



Discovering creative ways to share the hope of Jesus with people unconnected to church

Dear friends,

“The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want...” Brazilians are often deeply spiritual or mystical, and many seek protection or good fortune through objects or rituals, for instance Psalm 23 or the Bible. This presents one of the great challenges in the local church here in Brazil. While the vast majority of Brazilians identify as Christians, only a small percentage truly *know* the Lord. Only a few have truly experienced the kind of care and intimacy that Psalm 23 describes.

I have been thinking again about how the rain falls on everyone – the just and the unjust, the believer and the unbeliever alike. But what we need to ask is: are we truly part of the Shepherd’s flock? Do we know him and trust that he protects and cares for us? In my personal journey, I have come to experience his care in ways I had never imagined. It has changed me, and I have felt called to live in a way that allows me to naturally share this love with others – especially with those who do not yet know God. The Vineyard Floripa community has, over the years, become a place where people come with all kinds of stories, backgrounds, and spiritual experiences. Many have been taught that being a true Christian means being available to the local church at all times, which has caused emotional and spiritual burnout. Others have no prior knowledge of God but have had life-changing encounters with Jesus and are hungry to know him more.

My role, alongside the leadership team at Vineyard Floripa, has been to walk with people through the many different stages of their relationship with God. Some simply need a safe, healthy Christian environment. Others need to be gently guided into the truth of Christ. And still others need to encounter – perhaps for the first time – the love of Jesus, who gave himself for each one of us. Every story, every family, every woman who shares with me teaches me something new. These experiences continually enrich and deepen my own relationship with the Lord. I think of Danna, who came to us already bearing a powerful testimony – she had just been miraculously healed from a severe infection that nearly took her life. Though we had never met her before, we had been praying for her. When she finally joined us for a women’s meeting, she shared her story and found a community that embraced her and her family. Or Denise, who came from an African religion which is widely practiced here in Brazil. Her husband was a self-declared atheist. But through the prayers and evangelism of a member of our church, they found their way to Vineyard. They came to learn more – and found Jesus. Though they had once felt perfectly content in their beliefs and had no plans to start a family, now Denise is pregnant and already dreaming of seeing her child grow up in our Sunday school alongside



When I was ordained in June at the Vineyard Conference

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**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**



the other kids. There are so many stories like these in our local church – people learning to walk with Jesus and to truly live in relationship with him.

Linda, for example, is a 72-year-old woman from South Africa who showed up at one of our English-language services (which we hold twice a month). Her only experience with Jesus had been during her childhood in South Africa. As an adult, she explored various alternative spiritual paths. About 10 years ago, she moved to Brazil with her son, but since then, she's been living almost completely alone in Florianópolis, as her son works on cruise ships around the world. Linda has struggled with serious health problems. Our church has stepped in to support her with visits, prayer and practical help. Every week, she sends me WhatsApp messages telling me how she's doing and how she's feeling. While in the beginning she was hesitant to fully surrender her heart to Jesus, she's recently started sharing how she prays to Jesus at night, especially in moments of deep loneliness – and how those prayers have

brought her comfort. Just last Sunday, after we prayed for her at church, she told us she felt the presence of God – a warm sensation in her back, where she suffers from chronic pain due to a herniated disc. She expressed so much gratitude for having found Jesus and a loving community.

In June, we participated in **InterVinha**, a conference for Vineyard churches in southern Brazil. It was a time of deep connection, encouragement and spiritual growth. We were able to attend with five families from our church. During that conference, the Vineyard movement officially ordained me as the pastor of our local church. I am deeply grateful to God for all he has taught me and how he has strengthened me over the years, preparing me for this new season of leadership. It has been – and continues to be – a journey of learning, of challenges and of constant trust in Jesus. But I rest in the truth that, just like every other sheep in his flock, he takes care of me and my family, faithfully and lovingly.

In my personal life, Jimmy and I, as a couple, have been walking through a process of reconciliation after being separated for two years. Not everyone may know what led to our separation or how things unfolded, but it has been a significant journey of healing for all of us as a family. During my cancer diagnosis and treatment, I had time to reflect deeply on what truly matters in life, and I came to understand, more than ever, that forgiveness is what allows us to move forward and begin again. At this moment, all I can say is that God has been faithful through it all, and I continue to trust him every single day of my life.

Pray for:

- ▶ Vineyard Floripa to continue to be a safe place where people can encounter God
- ▶ the women's group at the church to keep growing and becoming stronger
- ▶ our family; that God may strengthen us, sustain us, and heal us completely

Katia, Joanna and Davi



Photos from top to bottom: Sunday Service at Vineyard Floripa; with Linda after a service at church; family – the four of us together



Discovering creative ways to share the hope of Jesus

It's so encouraging to hear news from other CMS partners sharing the hope of Jesus with people not yet connected to churches. In the UK, CMS's Pioneer Mission Training programme is equipping people to respond creatively to the Holy Spirit beyond the boundaries of traditional church. Read more and get inspired by other stories of hope at churchmissionsociety.org/bringhope