MMU – August 3, 2026

Note from Lisa – Who I am

I grew up in the San Fernando Valley in Woodland Hills, and my family attended a church that was part of the Reformed Church in America. It was a new church start in Canoga Park called Platt Ranch Community Church. We were there on Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday evening, and occasionally on Saturdays. We spent a lot of time at church.

I remember going to church every Sunday excited to go to Sunday School, because it started with a time of singing – *This Little Light of Mine, The Wise Man Built His House Upon a Rock, Zaccheus, and, of course, Jesus Loves Me*. After singing, we would hear a story about a missionary somewhere in the world. Finally, we went into our classrooms and learned the Bible lesson for the day, which was illustrated with flannel graph cutouts. Does anyone remember flannel graphs?

After Sunday School, we went to worship together as a family. And I remember sitting next to my mother, who usually separated me from my brother because, at some point during the service, one of us would start pinching or poking the other. Mom kept us quiet with an endless supply of red vines and peppermints, and when she couldn't one of us was sent to sit on the other side of Dad. My father was a Deacon and an Usher. He stayed after the service to count money, something he did well into his 80s. Because I took piano lessons, I was able to participate in worship from time to time, playing the offertory on the church piano.

Sunday evening was usually a sermon or Bible teaching. The pastor would go through a book of the Bible chapter by chapter, or we would hear from some teacher or another about things like Armageddon.

When I was in elementary school, I was able to attend the Wednesday night program, Jet Cadets, where I learned the books of the Bible, memorized verses, and competed for trophies in Bible drills. We also learned Bible stories that helped to reinforce what we were learning at home and in Sunday School. The night started with a shared meal, usually hot dogs, and I remember working on getting my pins for various accomplishments.

If I were to tell you that I was an exemplary child in church, I would not be telling the truth. Although I loved singing hymns and Sunday School Songs and yearned to hear the Bible stories, my brother and I were church terrors. We were often found running and chasing each other around the church buildings. At some point, we both managed to slide under the pews from the back of the church to the front in a race during the Sermon. By the time I

was in 3rd Grade, I would beg my mother to sign up for Nursery duty so that I could be with her and play with the toys in the Nursery rather than sit through what was for me a dry 30-45 minute sermon.

But despite my poor church behavior, Sunday School, Worship, Vacation Bible School, Jet Cadets, and Youth Group left an impression on me that stuck. Sometimes I loved going to church; sometimes I hated it. Sometimes I was the perfect child in the pew; sometimes I was a terror under your feet. But the Good News of the Gospel stuck. And from an early age, I yearned to lead worship and preach. Growing up in the RCA, without models of women in ministry, made it difficult for me to understand my call to ministry. Yet, I felt a deep calling that shaped my faith and future.

I'm grateful that I was not discouraged by the gender limits of the day. I'm grateful that my father always told me I could be whatever I wanted to be when I grew up. I'm grateful for parents and Sunday School teachers who taught me that God loves us unconditionally. And I believe every child and adult should feel that love and acceptance in church and beyond.

To this day, I believe that actively involving children in church life, including worship, is essential for their faith growth and development. Never tell a child they can't participate in worship or pursue a calling. Never assume that the restless child will never amount to anything or isn't absorbing the lessons. Because of people who didn't give up on me, I learned that God's love and acceptance are for everyone and that each person is called to different service, even the most challenging child.

As for my brother, he still plays drums in his church praise band and participates in Bible Studies. He married a wonderful woman, and together they have raised three incredible children who love the Lord.