



TO FINISH WELL

Worship Leader and Dove Award winning Songwriter Paul Baloché begins new chapter in ministry and life

The next new season rarely happens when you plan it. But it happens according to plan.

For more than 26 years, worship leader **Paul Baloché** and his singer/songwriter wife Rita made their home in east Texas. That's where he found his vocation and calling as worship pastor of Lindale's Community Christian Fellowship and where God had given him a vital ministry and a community of life-long friends. He and Rita raised their family there, and as his ministry expanded via 16 recordings and numerous teaching resources, the couple received offers to relocate and join larger ministries. But Paul and Rita stayed because Texas was home.

Then one day, after returning to a house full of empty bedrooms, they knew the time had come to consider a new season. *"We pretty much said out loud: 'The easy thing would be for us to just stay right here and rock on our porch.' Nothing was broken; it didn't need fixing... but it was good to hit the reset button and let go of the comfort and row the boat into some new waters,"* Paul recalls.

The couple put out a fleece, told a realtor they'd consider selling if an offer came along. Without even going on the market, the house sold within a month.



So after six months of purging through a quarter-century of life as they knew it, Paul and Rita left their church family with a blessing, and headed back to the land from whence they came, the northeast. They bounced around between their oldest daughter Sarah's place near Philadelphia and their son David's studio apartment, eventually landing in a one-bedroom apartment in New York City.

"Parenthood is not for the fainthearted," says Paul, who is the grandfather of two. "Young adult children need you just as much as younger children do, a fact that continues to challenge my self-centeredness. It's a fantasy that we get to do whatever we want when we want, but I have to learn to be a better listener

and only give advice when it's asked for. When they are adults, you start relating to them as adults, but our nature is to want to guard them from making mistakes, life-altering consequences... It's a delicate balancing act, like in marriage."

But it's a balancing act that the Balochés gladly attempt while continuing to transition into this new adventure. *"We don't know exactly what we're going to do here,"* said Paul after the move. *"But our prayer is, 'Lord, we would like to be available to the church here in NY, and to be an aunt and uncle or mother and father to these kids in ministry who are just getting started.'"*

Over the last 18 months, Baloché has been featured at festivals, conferences and workshops in the US, UK, France, India, Netherlands and Philippines. He has also plugged into a church where his son—himself

a singer/songwriter and teacher—attends, and has begun building a new community, reaching out to churches like Christ Tabernacle in the Bronx, Redeemer Church and Trinity Grace.

Most recently, members of this community, including worship leaders and musicians from around NY and the northeast, joined him in creating a new album. This community includes labelmates The Brilliance (John Arndt, David Gungor) along with Onaje Jefferson (Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir) and worship leaders/musicians from New York and the northeast. Vocalists Jennifer Holm and Madison Cunningham also make appearances, and Baloché's wife, Rita, and son, David, round out the contributions.

The resulting project, *Your Mercy*, which has already received a 5-star review from *Worship Leader* magazine, is available globally in stores and on digital platforms through Integrity Music.

Recorded live in a Brooklyn studio, *Your Mercy* seems an appropriate title for this new season as this "worship pastor of worship pastors" depends anew on God.

Paul describes the project as *"honest worship sessions with very few overdubs... no digital instruments or synthesizers... a back-to-basics simplicity, singing together new prayers and songs as a community to glorify God."*

For Paul, who has spent the past 30 years teaching and training worship leaders around the world—with instructional DVDs translated into 10 languages and albums in three languages—this new chapter holds great promise on both personal and ministry fronts.

One of the perks of this season of life, he says, is *"knowing who you are, and what you're good at, and even though we tend to discount our experiences, I consider it a gift to be trusted by worship teams of various denominations, a precious gift. And for as long as they'll let me, I want to be an authentic voice... sharing, listening, praying, advising, a friend and pastor to other pastors... to affirm and serve the church with no agenda and to experience the beauty in that."*

"Most of all, I want to be an authentic human, a faithful husband and father," says Paul, who beams with pride over David's latest video production, daughter Cherie's entrance into a Master's program and Sarah's growing family. *"To finish well, maybe in 50 years or so, that's my deepest desire. I hold it precious." ❖*

