

Azaria Spencer

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The call in action

Dear lovely family and friends,

Happy New Year!

As this year begins, my prayer for us all is for God to help us experience more of his peace and learn how to daily rest and live in his presence.

Christmas convivios and candles

Convivio is the Spanish word we use here for parties and gatherings, and during the Advent season it is very common to be invited to and involved in several. There are work convivios, church convivios, convivios with different social groups – we all love a reason to gather and celebrate. So, of course we have convivios with the children and youth here at SKD Guatemala too. This past year I got to help organise and run the convivios and it was a lot of fun. We hosted one for the children (8–12) and one for the youth (13+). There were games, food, pinatas, hot chocolate, gifts and of course the Christmas story. One of the games I planned was the old classic pass the parcel, with an exciting twist. In each layer there was of course a sweet but in addition a piece of paper with a Bible verse that revealed part of the story of Jesus' birth. It was great to see the winner of each round opening the parcel to find the next part of the story and then opening the Bible to read it aloud, sharing it with everyone. After all, sharing is a big part of the story. The angels shared with the shepherds and after hearing and seeing, the shepherds went out and shared what they had witnessed. Now it is our turn to share the good news too.

Let's pray for every child and young person that heard the good news through our convivios this Christmas, that they not only heard but that God will continue to reveal himself to them and that they can go on to share with others.

It was also beautiful to incorporate a short Christingle service within our convivios, led by Mark and Rosalie Balfour (CMS mission partners). Christingle services have always been a favourite of mine and it's great to have a taste of home and share some of our culture here in Guatemala, especially when it meant we could gather, taking a moment with the children and youth, inviting them to reflect on Jesus as the Light of the World and the incredible love of our sacrificial Saviour! It felt so special to share those brief pauses during our fun-filled convivios.

Best of both cultures

This Christmas I got to enjoy the best of both

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Name: Azaria Spencer

Location: Guatemala

My call: To intentionally come alongside at-risk children and young adults, engaging in discipleship as they explore deeper relationship with God and empowering them to pursue their dreams.

My role: Working with street-connected children and young people at risk in Guatemala City.



Telling the Christmas story with the children through pass the parcel

worlds, meaning I celebrated, for the first time, a fully Guatemalan Christmas on the 24th and still got to tuck into a fully British Christmas dinner on the 25th. On the 24th I went to spend Christmas with a Guatemalan family and after years of hearing about “real” Guatemalan Christmases I finally got to experience it for myself. We ate a delicious and leisurely family dinner at around 8pm, turkey with gravy, rice and salad. Following this we went to the roof terrace to play with cuetes, small fireworks and firecrackers. When I say play with, that is what I mean: there we were on the roof throwing firecrackers and lighting small fireworks and sparklers and all around us families were doing the exact same. At midnight the real fireworks began and the whole sky was alight with colours and sparkles. If we ignore the slightly dangerous element, it was really fun and truly beautiful. Once back inside we enjoyed a hot drink to warm up, a time of prayer and then presents before bed, at which point it was 2:30am and the party was still going on outside and in neighbouring houses.

The next day, or later that day really, we went to Mark and Rosalie’s house to celebrate with them over a much-appreciated British Christmas dinner complete with crackers, pigs in blankets, trifle and the Queen’s speech. To top it off I was able to connect online with my family in the UK. Technology is a huge blessing when you live so far away from loved ones.

Please join me in giving thanks for God’s goodness and provision, especially of friends and “family” for me here.

Anticipation and adventures ahead

Now I find myself looking forward to the year ahead and all the potential adventures it holds.

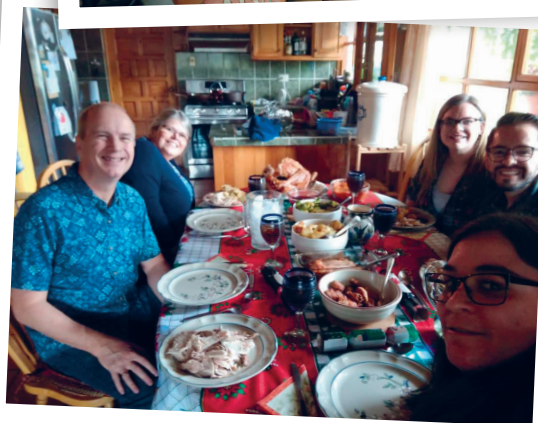
I can’t wait to see how God continues to lead us in the work and ministry at Centro Opp, the mentoring centre I coordinate. Especially as we look to focus more on discipleship and helping young people learn more about God, and supporting them as they deepen their relationships with him. My head is full of ideas and possible projects and plans, and yet the moments I enjoy the most are still those times when one of the young people comes and just wants to spend time together. When all else can take a backseat as we enjoy a coffee and a chat. After all, Jesus modelled being present with the person in front of you. I’m starting to find my feet more in my leadership role and that is exciting too, it’s a privilege to lead a team of passionate people and see the youth taking on more responsibility and serving others too.

Please pray for me as I continue to seek God and see what he is doing here and try to join in. Pray for us as we develop programmes in Centro Opp and serve the vulnerable youth, especially that we can all grow in relationship with God; team and youth together.

Thank you for your continued support, love and prayers.

Love and blessings

Azaria x



Photos from top to bottom: Pass the parcel; Christingle with the young people; Christingle with the children; Christmas dinner with Mark, Rosalie and friends

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