



# Mark and Rosalie Balfour

Link Letter no. 18 | May 2022

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**Location:** Guatemala



**What we do:** Providing pastoral support for workers in urban ministries, especially Street Kids Direct and partner projects in Guatemala and Honduras.

Dear friends,

As we write this letter, we are currently back in the UK to see our family and visit supporters. Our third grandson, Micah, was born last week and it is a huge privilege to be here for this time. We have started our church visits and are looking forward to seeing many of you either this year or on our next visit in 2023.

We hope you had a wonderful Easter. When we last wrote we were anticipating Christmas and it was good to be involved with various Christmas activities, including Christingles with the children and young people at Centro Opp, one of Street Kids Direct's (SKD) mentoring centres in Guatemala City, and also several interviews with people in mission that were broadcast on Radio Christmas.

2022 didn't begin quite as planned. Having managed to get booster jabs in the first week of January, we both then contracted COVID-19. Our symptoms were comparatively mild (it was most probably the Omicron strain) but it left us with differing levels of fatigue and "brain fog" for several weeks. We are very grateful, though, that it was nothing worse than that.

Our aim is to visit SKD supported projects in Honduras three times a year – in March it was good to link up once more with fellow CMS and SKD mission partners Lindsey and Steve Poulson and spend time with the team at Proyecto Alas. A highlight for us was an afternoon of prayer and worship with the team, which included praying round their new mentoring centre and coffee shop in the heart of Talanga. We also spent time with Jen Olsen-Padilla of One Day Revival Ministries, who work in a formerly gang-controlled town not far from the capital, and to hear fresh stories of lives being transformed by Jesus and the naturally messy mission which happens in that place.

Our work with SKD Guatemala continues, often with one-to-one times with members of the team, but also in providing retreats and teaching input. It was good to give some training on the theme of expectations, using material from Peter and Geri Scazzero's Emotionally Healthy Discipleship, which hopefully has equipped the team with some tools to increase the quality of their communication. A particularly poignant feature of one team retreat was a time of prayer for the Ukraine: the war there is most certainly on the hearts and minds of people in Central America.

Among other areas of pastoral work, Treasures of God, the home for girls with serious disability of which we are trustees, has asked Mark to be chair of the board. The ministry has purchased land on which to



*In Honduras with Lindsey and Steve Poulson and Jen of One Day Revival Ministries.*

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



construct a purpose-built home and other facilities and, now that the construction phase has started, the trustees have needed to put in place new processes and ways of communicating to enable the project to thrive. We have been able to give help and guidance in this as we also continue, especially, to give personal support to Naomi who heads up the ministry.

So often in what we do, we feel that we are a voice to say, “It’s okay to take care of yourself – indeed, it’s more than just okay, it’s absolutely necessary.” We know that in full-time Christian ministry vital matters like investing in marriage, friendships and proper rest often get pushed to one side. And of course, spending time with Jesus and listening to him can so easily be side-lined. Add to that the “missionary myth” that still exists – that somehow, those who carry that title are special, super-spiritual people – and you can have a recipe for toxic busyness and burnout, or at the very least, the temptation to base your identity in your title or your “ministry” and not in who you are in Jesus – a beloved son or daughter of your heavenly Father.

So, as two people with feet of clay and decidedly imperfect and unfinished in so many ways (as any of you who know us can testify), we have a role of not only asking “how are you, really?”, but also assuring someone that what they say in response *matters*. And in this work we have the consistent encouragement of CMS and Street Kids Direct.

People we care for are themselves working with: former and continuing gang members and prostitutes, kids and young people at high risk of living on the streets, of joining gangs or of being groomed for sexual exploitation, addicts who return again and again to the streets, children rejected by their families or unable to be cared for by them, and cross-cultural workers at their emotional and spiritual limit.

There is almost always a danger in glamorizing the kind of work done by those we support – it can sound dramatic, heroic, edgy – but the reality is that, along with the joy, it can be tough and heartbreaking, and it can grind you down. Yes there are good news stories, but there are also plenty of stories that never make it to social media or missionary newsletters. And our call is often to listen (and not be shocked by what we hear), to pray, to encourage and, many times along with that, to provide hospitality and a place of rest, if we can.

And to the many of you who support us in this work by praying – which is indispensable – and by giving so that we can be there to bless others, a huge THANK YOU.

As ever, please keep praying that we draw close to Jesus and listen to his voice – that we put into practice what we advocate for others – and that our trust and confidence in him continue to grow.

Love, Mark and Rosalie



**Photos from top to bottom:** Praying round the new Proyecto Alas mentoring centre and coffee shop; Christingles at Centro Opp; A retreat for the Centro Opp volunteer team and fellow CMS mission partner, Azaria Spencer; A teaching morning for SKDG.



## Going further with Church Mission Society

**Prayer is the engine room of mission:** Here at CMS, we know that the history of mission is the history of answered prayer. We would love you to join us as a praying community around the world at [churchmissionsociety.org/prayer](https://churchmissionsociety.org/prayer)