



# Azaria Spencer

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**Location:** Guatemala



**What I do:** Coming alongside and discipling at-risk children and young adults and empowering them to pursue their dreams.

Dear lovely family and friends,

It's a joy to be writing to you all again, let's begin by thanking God for his faithfulness.

## First fruits

As I mentioned in my last link letter, I started this year full of anticipation and excitement for what God had in store for me in my role as coordinator of programmes at our centre for young people here in Guatemala.

God placed a team of dedicated and gifted people around me at Centro Opp and he has continued to grow that team and help us deepen in relationship with him and one another. In turn we have been able to grow several of the programmes at the centre and are starting to witness the first fruits of what God is doing here. These first fruits may still be small and not yet ripe but buds are starting to bloom into flowers, and as those flowers grow the first signs of fruits are starting to appear. I have always considered working with young people to be a privilege; there is nothing more rewarding than when a young person chooses to let you into their world, starts to share and actually seeks you out for guidance and help. That reward is even greater when those young people come from complex family situations and challenging home lives, where many have experienced adults being inconsistent and untrustworthy. It takes time for any two people to build trust but even more so with these added challenges. So, those first fruits I am referring to may seem small; like when a young girl comes and asks you to pray for her and her family because her mother is in hospital and she is scared. She never really got to have a relationship with her mother as she was in prison until recently. Or when a young man in his early 20s comes to you and shares that his girlfriend is pregnant and he tells you that you are the second person he has told because he values you in his life and knows that you care for him. Tears are welling as I type. Or when a timid teenage girl starts to attend activities regularly and you get to witness her open up, make friends and start to find a place where she can belong. Or when a young man who came with all of his barriers up, unmovable and angry with the world, finally starts to soften and show his true heart. A heart that is gentle, that is seeking acceptance, safety and love. I say it again, it's a privilege. As we build community for and with these young people I am excited to see what God has for each one of them and us as a team.

These fruits might be small right now but they are already having a huge impact on my heart and are testament to what God is doing through the team here. Guess what else these fruits are a sign of? They



First fruits

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



are a sign that there is more to come and that it will be good, because with our Father there is always more, and it is always for our good.

Please pray for the youth that are coming to our programmes and activities at Centro Opp, that their hearts and minds can be open to the One who created them, and for us as a team as we seek God's guidance in how best to serve God and these precious young people.

### Activities in action

I thought it might be nice to share a bit more about the types of activities we are doing within our programmes here at Centro Opp. As I mentioned I am the programmes coordinator which among other things means I get to oversee all of the activities. These activities include music lessons, a choir and the recording and production of songs written by our musically gifted volunteers; cooking workshops with some barista skills thrown in (we hope to eventually have some form of vocational training coffee shop too); and regular art and creativity workshops, with a view to including art therapy for young people dealing with trauma. Another goal is to launch a new online radio station featuring youth with their own shows. There is also a gym at our centre run by one of our own young people who is being trained as a personal trainer and has started to train other youth. We strongly encourage our youth to volunteer and serve alongside us. I continue to host a weekly group with the older young people, all adults now and growing up fast. There is also our Saturday youth club which happens twice a month and is one of my favourite activities. All the youth come and we start with a big lunch together and then have a whole afternoon of activities and fun including devotionals and times of prayer and worship. This is where community and discipleship happen more intentionally, but both these elements are integral to how I hope I am leading the team and the programmes in general.

### Mentoring matters

In other news, I recently started mentoring P, a lovely girl with a vibrant and inquisitive personality. We have already started to build a good friendship and are enjoying our weekly sessions together. Mentoring helps transform lives and I am excited to see how God uses me to support P and I am sure the learning and blessings will be mutual.

Please continue keeping me in your prayers, especially as I lead others and aim to always focus on God and what he is doing.

Thank you for your continued support, love and prayers.

Love and blessings, Azaria x



**Photos from top to bottom:** Singing lessons in Centro Opp; young people hone their barista skills; games in Centro Opp; mentoring with P, David and M.



## Going further with Church Mission Society

**Adelante:** Friday 30 September and Saturday 1 October 2022.

A hybrid event – in-person and online – to celebrate, learn about and pray for mission in and from Latin America. Book at [churchmissionsociety.org/adelante](https://churchmissionsociety.org/adelante)

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