



Mark and Rosalie Balfour

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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 we are preparing once again to make the long drive to Honduras where we will be spending Easter and the week following visiting Proyecto Alas (supported by Street Kids Direct). The Alas team specifically invited us for this time so that we could take part with them in activities for the International Day for Street Children on 12 April. Rosalie was in Honduras with a team from St Peter's Maidenhead the very first time this was celebrated in 2011, a trip which ultimately led to us working here in Central America. While in Honduras we hope to catch up with other people we know working in urban ministries.

In Guatemala our main focus this year has been on providing pastoral support to the Street Kids Direct Guatemala (SKDG) team. Every Friday morning the team meet for prayer – thankfully more often in person now than on Zoom. At one of those meetings Duncan Dyason recounted how he first came to work with street children in Guatemala. He spoke of his heart always being for those who are not “in the room”, those many children and young people living in situations of great vulnerability in Guatemala City who have yet to be reached. The truth is that while there are virtually no children living independently on the streets, there is always a drift toward street life among the most vulnerable or into gang life or prostitution. (Girls younger than 11 can be targeted for the latter.)

Duncan has shared with us the hope for a renewed vision on the part of SKDG: while great work is being done by the team, there are children who have “slipped off the edge” and need to be reached with the hope that is found in Jesus. As part of seeking that renewal we have found ourselves in a season of working with the team on unity and conflict resolution. We know that disagreement and conflict are normal in teams – it's how you work through those things that counts, in a way that honours God and other people. So much of our work has taken place with team members over coffee/tea or meals together, listening and giving support and encouragement. It is a privilege to serve the SKDG team and we are looking forward to seeing what Jesus will do in and through them in the coming months.

Rosalie has been giving English lessons most weeks to Juan Carlos and Heydy, a couple in the SKDG team who want to be involved in cross-cultural mission. At their request, Mark has started to work with them on deepening their understanding of the Bible. We both enjoy this very much as it draws on our gifts and experience and it is a delight to support them in this way.



*Coffee with the SKDG team
after a Friday prayer meeting*

Support Mark and Rosalie Balfour:
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**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**



As we have mentioned in the past, with the blessing of CMS and SKD we are on the board of the Treasures of God Children's Home for girls with disabilities, which Mark now chairs. The lack of provision for girls with this level of disability – and the current situation with fostering and adoption in Guatemala – means that the home is their only option for receiving the care they need. Treasures of God is currently renting a house which, while good in many ways, is not entirely suitable for the girls' needs. A while ago some land was bought on which to construct a purpose-built home for the girls and in the last few months the Lord has provided – through people's generosity – enough for the project to continue to its next stage. (The director, Naomi Heye, is from Canada and the vast majority of funding comes from North America.) A significant part of our work on the board is giving pastoral support to Naomi in the difficult and demanding role she occupies.

At the beginning of this year we were very grateful to go to Ushuaia in Argentina for the first ever CMS Latin America regional conference. It was a significant time and hugely refreshing as we gathered at the "end of the world", an extraordinarily beautiful place that saw the beginning of the work of SAMS/CMS in the region. It was particularly moving to be welcomed by one of the local churches and prayed for by their congregation, as well as meeting with – and praying and worshipping with – people in mission from all over Latin America.

It is election year in Guatemala, not only for the presidency but all major political positions. That is often a time of increased instability and unrest. In addition, there has been a marked increase in violent crime. So we do ask for your prayer for protection and for peace with justice for this wonderful nation.

In a recent video interview for a supporting church we were asked, "What would you particularly like to give thanks for?" Our immediate answer was, "We are still here". Now in our seventh year – with the Lord's help and the help of so many of you who have been praying and supporting – we have come through many challenges – and we are seeing the fruit of having been here for this long.

We are looking forward to meeting many of you on our UK home assignment this year. By the time you receive this, you will have celebrated Easter. Because of Jesus' resurrection we have true hope for today and tomorrow. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13). Please pray that we may overflow with hope as we keep our eyes on Jesus.

With our love,

Mark & Rosalie



Photos from top to bottom: Heydy learning English with Rosalie; Rosalie and Naomi at the land for the new Treasures of God home; CMS Latin America conference in Ushuaia



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Jesus never gives up. Neither should we. We live in a fractured, hurting world. It can be tempting to give up: on hope, on people, on the idea that things can ever change. Yet, Jesus invites us to follow him on a journey to the edges. Find out more at churchmissionsociety.org/nevergiveup

Please note that opinions expressed in link letters are those of mission partners, not necessarily of Church Mission Society.

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