



# Mark and Rosalie Balfour

Link Letter no. 22 | June 2023

**Contact details:**  
revmbalfour@gmail.com  
r\_balfour@sky.com



**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,

We are writing this letter less than a week after landing in the UK, where we are looking forward to spending time with supporting churches and some individual supporters and friends, as well as seeing our family, including our three grandsons, who are growing fast.

Just over a week ago we helped to run a two-day retreat for the Street Kids Direct Guatemala (SKDG) team, a culmination of a period of time working with them in the areas of unity and renewal of vision. On the first day we encouraged each team member to tell the story of how they came to work with SKDG, what they had learned of God during that time and what continues to motivate them in their work. Rosalie cooked meals for the team on both days and we enjoyed not only the formal sessions but also having time to hang out with the team, including a trip to a nearby “viviero” (garden centre) to buy ice creams. It was good to see the team taking time to talk and grow in relationship with each other outside of the pressure of their working context.



*Retreat with the SKDG team*

Our ongoing pastoral support of individuals within the team has also included Rosalie teaching English and Mark giving time to discipleship and learning more about the Bible with several team members. It has been an exciting time for SKDG as a new mentoring and outreach centre has just opened in Santa Faz, an area of Guatemala City where many children live at risk of gangs and street life.

In April we made the long drive to Honduras for our first visit to projects there this year. We began with a couple of nights by the sea with Lindsey and Steve Poulson, who also work with CMS and SKD, and the group of young men whom they mentor (many of whom we have known for years). A good part of the following week we were in the town of Talanga with the Poulsons and SKD-supported Proyecto Alas, a highlight of which was participating in the International Day for Street Children. Children from many different schools and organisations, including those in the Alas programme, marched down the main street with banners proclaiming the rights of children to education and a life free from abuse. The march culminated with speeches and music in the town’s main square. As with SKDG, so Jesus is doing amazing things through the Alas team – do pray for them as they continue to reach out to children on the edges.

In February we were invited to go to a service held by a church plant that has started on La Linea – one of

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



the main areas of prostitution in Guatemala City and where our friends Natalie and Shawn Sagert and their ministry Tamar's Hope have a drop-in centre called La Puerta ("The Door"). Tamar's Hope allow the church to meet at La Puerta – it is a plant specifically for the women who work on La Linea and their families. While we were there, a friend reminded us of the English afternoon tea Rosalie had organised a couple of years ago for the cafe which had been training some of the women who had left La Linea. That led us to wonder if it was something we could offer as a one-off event for Natalie and Shawn to run at La Puerta, as they continually look for

ways to build relationship with the women of La Linea and bring them into the centre. Crossing the threshold can take a huge amount of courage for the women.

As it happened, the date we could offer turned out to be 10 May – Mother's Day in Guatemala (as it is in many other countries). Rosalie made the most of our newly repaired oven to cook vast quantities of cake and scones for the event. It was an extraordinary privilege to be there as 50 women responded to the invitation and came through the door – some for the very first time, including one who had been not only resistant but antagonistic towards the ministry for the past eight years. Mark was invited to share a few words (in Spanish) and knew – overwhelmingly – that what should be communicated was Jesus' love for those who were there. All of them would have heard the street preachers who visit La Linea preaching "at" them with words of condemnation and many would have suffered rejection by churches.

We know that Jesus is present everywhere all the time, but the sense of his presence that day was wonderful. As Natalie would say, "Never doubt that Jesus likes to hang around with prostitutes." (If you would like to know more about the ministry of Tamar's Hope please do visit their site: [tamarshope.com](http://tamarshope.com))

Thank you to all those who pray and give so that we may continue to serve Jesus in Central America. We are very grateful for the partnership we have with you. In Guatemala right now, violence is markedly on the increase. Three families who are friends of ours have had people they know murdered (shot) in the last few months. And as we come back to the UK each time we are aware of how tough it can be to be a disciple of Jesus in a confused and divided culture. But we also know that Jesus is Lord of all and we can always trust him. As he has promised, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). So please keep on praying that we keep our eyes – and hearts – fixed on Jesus.

With our love,

Mark & Rosalie



*Photos from top to bottom: In Omoa, Honduras, with the Poulsons and the young men they mentor; the Alas team and some of the children in the programme; children marching for the International Day for Street Children 2023 in Talanga, Honduras; Mother's Day event on La Linea with Tamar's Hope*



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