



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,

We have some big news to share with you, which may come as a surprise: it's certainly been something of a surprise to us.

For a very long time we have both felt a missional pull to Cornwall, a pull that goes back to even before Mark was ordained. So much so that when Mark was finishing theological college, he wrote to the then Bishop of Truro to see if there were any curacies, but never received a reply. Jesus instead took us to Churchdown in Gloucestershire for the curacy, a time for which we are very grateful.

We had no notion of moving away from Guatemala and were not looking for anything else: we were enjoying being part of the work developing here and also supporting people in Honduras. However, at the end of November a job was advertised for a clergy post in Cornwall and we both felt a nudge – well, more of a push really – from the Holy Spirit to apply.

Mark was asked for interview in January, and our visit to the UK also enabled us to spend time with Sam, Lois, Theo, Jacob and Micah before their move to Perth in Australia at the end of February, and to celebrate Mark's mum's 80th birthday. We are sorry we could not share the full reason for our time in the UK with you all, but we know you will understand that this is how it works with job interviews in the CofE. Mark received the news the same day as his interview that Truro diocese would like him to take up the job, but it has not been until now (for administrative reasons) that it can be officially announced.

Mark is to be Rector of Illogan – a parish in the west of Cornwall comprising three congregations and covering the area of Illogan, Portreath and Pool, situated between the towns of Redruth and Camborne. As the parish profile notes, "this part of Cornwall is among the most economically deprived in the UK" and engaging with those affected by poverty is a priority for the local church. Importantly, however, the parish lists its first priority as reaching out "to those who do not know Jesus", and we were very encouraged by the heart for mission in the church when we met many from the congregations on our parish tour before the interview.

We are very much going as a team, although Rosalie hopes her main missional focus will be on people who are unconnected with church. At the time of writing we do not yet know when the appointment will begin. Our hope is to move back to the UK at the end of April/beginning of May. Talking to others who have made a similar move, we know we will need a good transition time, including debrief, reorientation and rest, and will remain CMS mission partners for that period. There will also be a lot of practical things associated with setting up home in the UK again.



The CMS Central America team at Azaria and David's wedding: Steve and Lindsey Poulson, Azaria and David Pocasangre and us.

Support Mark and Rosalie Balfour:
churchmissionsociety.org/balfour

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



Thank you to all of you who have walked with us through all or part of our eight years with CMS (seven of them in Guatemala). We would be very grateful for your continued support through this time of change as we prepare for this next missional step the Lord has for us.

We will miss being part of the CMS Central America team with Lindsey and Steve Poulson in Honduras (who, like us, work with Street Kids Direct), and Azaria and David Pocasangre in Guatemala. (If you would like to find out more about them all, do check out their pages on the CMS website.) In November we were all together in Guatemala for Azaria and David's wedding – a very special occasion.

Since our last letter, we have continued to give pastoral support to the Street Kids team in Guatemala City. As well as meeting with team members individually, this has included helping with a two-day retreat in November at which Mark gave some training on "expectations", based on material from Peter and Geri Scazzero's Emotionally Healthy Discipleship, and some opportunity to reflect on and pray with some of the promises in Scripture.

In December we made another journey to Honduras to visit the projects there. We were accompanied by our friend Maddie Buchanan, who works with the mission organisation Latin Link. A highlight for us in Honduras was running a Christingle for the children in Proyecto Alas – and we did the same for Street Kids Direct in Guatemala when we returned. It was good to spend an extended time with the Alas team in Talanga, including Sergio whom we first knew in Guatemala when he had just come off living on the streets. His story is featured on the CMS website, demonstrating the transformation that Jesus brings to the lives of those who trust in him: churchmissionsociety.org/blog/news/new-chapters-in-central-america/

Although we are excited by the challenge of moving to Cornwall and engaging in mission there, we are feeling a whole mix of emotions right now, including, of course, a lot of sadness at leaving the people here in Central America. We will be making our final trip to Honduras in a couple of weeks' time – a country we have had a relationship with for thirteen years – and finish our work with Street Kids Direct Guatemala just before Easter week.

As we prepare for another season of big changes (and challenges), as always we ask for your prayer that we keep our eyes on Jesus. Please pray too for those we will be saying goodbye to in Guatemala and Honduras, and for Jesus to provide other people to walk alongside those we have been accompanying pastorally.

Thank you again for all your friendship and support,

Love,

Mark and Rosalie



Photos from top to bottom: Rosalie doing crafts with the children in Honduras; Mark playing a game with the children at Alas; Street Kids Direct Christmas party at Centro Opp in Guatemala City; Rosalie with members of the SKDG team on retreat; with some of the team in Honduras about to eat baleadas together



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