



Lindsey and Steve Poulson

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Location: Honduras



What we do: Mentoring, creating safe spaces for at-risk children and young people to grow and supporting local project development.

Hello dear friends,

Although you will be reading this letter (hopefully!) in March, we are writing on the rare occurrence of the 29th day of February. The concept of a leap year evokes thoughts of *jumping forward*, of catching up after perhaps lagging behind, but definitely of progress and advancing. While this extra day on the calendar helps us realign our marking of time to the earth's movements, I (Lindsey) have been reflecting on how walking with Jesus requires us to constantly *realign ourselves* – our priorities, our thoughts, our decisions – to *his* movements.

Without (hopefully!) belabouring the analogy, we have certainly seen the ministry take several “leaps” forward already this calendar year:

While we finished 2023 having served just under 60 children and young people between the mentoring centre and the university/trade school programmes, we are beginning 2024 serving over 70 individuals!:

- ▶ 55 students in primary or secondary education
- ▶ 5 young adults in trade schools
- ▶ 3 young adults in university
- ▶ 1 young adult in the police academy
- ▶ 1 young adult in the military academy



Joel looks out from his humble home, when he should be in school

While it's very exciting to see the mentoring centre fuller than ever, in the past it has been easy for our team to get caught up in attending to all the kids that *are* arriving, often leaving those who are *not* coming to fall by the wayside. You may have noticed that the previous numbers add up to less than 70... this is because we also have a list of seven young people who dropped out of education last year, and are currently not interested in studying. Joel, 12 years old, is one such young person. Joel has been part of the Alas programme for several years, and has been in and out of school various times since we have known him. Once again he was not registered for the new school year which started in February, instead spending his days at home, or wandering around the central park or working odd jobs. This year we are beginning an “intervention” programme to work with Joel and the other six who have left school, frequently visiting and maintaining a mentoring relationship with them in hopes of encouraging them to return to education. Please pray for

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wisdom in that process for our team, and that ultimately the Lord would do the needed work in their hearts.

We are learning that we cannot control what does or doesn't bring a child back into education... sometimes it seems progress is slow or non-existent, and then seemingly "all of a sudden" a struggling young person *leaps* forward. For most of 2023, Marbeli (now 10 years old) was in and out of school, similarly to Joel. Marbeli is one of 16 siblings and her mother is bedridden due to various illnesses, which means she cannot look after Marbeli properly or make sure she goes to school. Marbeli much preferred the freedom of roaming the streets to being

in a classroom, and couldn't be motivated to stay in school. In our annual planning meeting in January, she was placed on our "intervention" list; visits were made to her home to speak with her, her mother and some older siblings, and it was decided that she would again be registered in school (as we had done many times before). And for reasons that can only be attributed to the miraculous, in this first month of February we have watched Marbeli flourish like never before! Our team has been amazed by how motivated she is, arriving at the mentoring centre after school in her school uniform, eager to work on her homework and actually showing signs of progress in maths and reading. Like seeds germinating underground, we never know when what has been watered will push to the surface; but we continue to do the slow, consistent work of tending the soil of these young hearts and minds through mentoring – leaving the rest to the Lord's timing. Please pray for Marbeli and her progress!

In other news, Cafe Alas opened a second coffee shop location in January! We were amazed at how the Lord opened the doors for this unexpected advancement – although there were a few delays, the process actually went quite quickly. While it took *three years* to receive the operations permit for the first coffee shop in Talanga, the permit for this new shop was approved in just *one day*! Carlos, the manager of the first coffee shop, has moved to the town of Siguatepeque (four hours from Talanga) to manage the new one. Carlos' story is also one of miraculous growth; while he has always been an incredible worker, he was very against Christianity when we first hired him in 2022. He was often confused by certain ways we sought to operate the business with Christian values (sacrificing one day of sales each week to close for rest, providing second chances instead of automatically sacking employees, etc.), but as time went on he began to open his heart more and more. He said that for the first time he was able to witness "real Christians" in the Proyecto Alas and business leadership teams: people who were actually attempting to follow Jesus and show his love, rather than the hypocrisy he had previously experienced. Carlos is now actively seeking God, having times of prayer with his young family and even starting to attend church. Please pray, not only for the growth of this second coffee shop, but also for Carlos and his wife Carolina as they grow in faith and settle into their new home and the routine of working parents, thankful for the help of Carolina's family close by.

Thank you, as always for your prayers and encouragement. We are looking *forward* to what is yet to come this year.

Blessings to you all,

Lindsey and Steve Poulson



Photos from top to bottom: Marbeli's bright smile: a welcome addition to homework sessions; last year cafe manager Carlos and his wife Carolina welcomed their first child, Luke!; Fernanda, our newly hired part-time psychologist, works with one of the girls; we continue to look after the university/trade school young men. The other week we attended an event at the cinema to see *The Chosen*, a TV series about the ministry of Jesus and his disciples



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