



GLOBAL SHORE

OPPORTUNITIES

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TRANSFORMING GUATEMALA THROUGH CHRIST-CENTERED EDUCATION

STARTING THE SCHOOL YEAR IN A PANDEMIC

I want to say goodbye to 2020 the same way that everybody does... but I was listening to a sermon that said if we do that, then we'll miss the lessons God had for us. So instead I think I want to say that 2020 is the year that we learned that we're fragile and weak. Structure can feel like strength, but when that's taken away it's just you, your family and your relationship with the Lord.

This year we realized just how much we depended on that structure, and we need to depend on the One who doesn't change, no matter what circumstances you find yourself in.

The Bible tells us that His strength is perfected in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). We shouldn't despise weakness or think of it as a negative thing. The Lord doesn't see it that way. He sees it and says: "I can work through that."

When we planned for 2021, we hoped for the best: we wanted to have our students back at school. We started out with the basics: hand sanitizer, temperature checks, frequent hand-washing, separate the desks, mask-wearing. There were a few classes that we moved into larger spaces. We installed hand-washing stations at our elementary school and found a doctor in our church community to serve as medical advisor, ready to direct our response if someone is exposed or becomes sick.

*FROM JULIANNA KONRAD DE PELAEZ,
OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN GUATEMALA*

The government has been using a colour system: if our municipality is in "green" or "yellow", we can open, but our municipality is currently in "red". That means **we're not currently able to have in-person classes, or even a hybrid model**. Our best guess is that we'll be working online for a couple of months, but things are changing all the time.

We've been told we can start some in-person classes if we're in "orange" — but we've also been told we can't have any classes until we're in "yellow". It's as unclear as it sounds. We don't know what next week will hold: we could be holding in-person classes, or we could continue like this for several months.



New hand-washing stations ensure that our youngest students can maintain hygiene protocols throughout the day

“A COMPLETE LIFE CHANGE”

Pamela graduated from our school this past year, and came with her parents to pick up her diploma and share about her experience at our school. We're so proud of our graduating students who worked so hard to keep on track and finish 2020 strong!

I came here in Grade 3 but left after Grade 6 to study somewhere else. I got the chance to see how things were elsewhere and it was really different. You can tell the difference between where God is and where you don't find His presence. You can feel His love everywhere here — but when I left I stopped feeling His love. Here the teachers helped me be closer to God. I grew a lot, spiritually, during my years here in the school.



Above: parents could join their students as they received their diplomas; below: home-room teachers presented diplomas to their students, celebrating their accomplishment with them



I came back in Grade 8 and Teacher Samuel was my home-room teacher for two years. He was always there to support me, advise me and listen to me when I needed to talk. He really impacted my life.

Most people don't understand, but coming to this school can be a complete change in your life. Despite this year [2020], the school had a great impact in my life and it's a blessing to be here.



“GOD SPEAKING THROUGH ME”

Luis Fernando joined our staff in November 2019 and is teaching Grade 2 this year. He's one of 40+ staff members working to transform Guatemala through Christ-centred education.

I started hearing about CCAF at church, that it was the best school, that it's really strict, that they teach really well and have really good English.

I really like kids — when I went to church and saw kids there I wanted to see them, hug them. I felt like I should work with kids. God's given me grace, too, to work with them. They look up to me a lot.

One day Pastor Jasmin (children's pastor and high school principal) told me there was a vacancy in the school, and invited me to

apply. I was interviewed and went through the application process, and was hired to teach Grade 3.

I love being a teacher. When I started teaching it was like God was the one who was speaking through me. He's the one who works and who puts us in the right place to serve.

Our school is founded in faith in God, believing in what He says. At another school, it might just be a job and maybe you go to church, maybe you don't, but here you're responsible to take care of your spiritual life.

Being here in the school helps you to grow, spiritually. Not every job is like this. It's going to help you grow a lot spiritually and professionally.



To partner with Luis Fernando in his teaching in 2021, you can visit globalshore.org/fernando.



Hand sanitizer and a temperature check are mandatory for entrance

Our parent community is concerned about another year of distance learning. We've had parents say they can't continue — that they need to go to work, they can't supervise their kids all day.

We know our student population, and many of them wouldn't make it through another year like last year. Some will simply drop out.

We also know that the largest part of our student population simply doesn't have access to a computer and reliable internet access. This online system is imperfect, but at this point, it's the most that we can do.

Instead of parents picking up and dropping off work each quarter, they're going to stop by the school each week. We found last year that students could fall too far behind in a quarter. It was easy for them to not finish or hand in their homework, and no one would know until two months had passed. This year, there'll be better supervision and parents and teachers will have an up-to-date picture of student progress.

We have a large number of students in homes where parents are absent, or in the middle of an alcohol addiction. For students

in homes like that, their lives are filled with uncertainty. "What's going to happen today? Am I going to eat today? Are my parents going to lose their jobs?" There are very few jobs here where people can work remotely. Many people have lost their jobs. Families are on edge. Kids are often really good at adapting, but that doesn't mean they're doing well. It doesn't mean they'll be fine. It means they're surviving. It's not a situation with a lot of hope.

Hope is what our school does really well, though. We show students how they can have hope in the midst of difficult circumstances. Every day there's a place where they can go to find refuge and inspiration. They can know that the Lord is working, that this isn't the end.

Everyone understands that we're not entirely in control any more, but it's still hard to start this year like this. When I was struggling in 2020, the Lord spoke to me really clearly. He said: **"Do what you can when I give you the opportunity, and stop feeling guilty about what you're not doing." That's what I've been focusing on: doing what's put before me in the ways I can.**



Some classes have moved to larger rooms to comply with distancing guidelines

There are things we can't do anything about, where we can't carry the responsibility. We need to be accountable to what the Lord sets before us, and leave the rest to Him. That's the way to go forward.

Over and over again, the Lord has spoken to us about how important these kids are to him, and how the Kingdom belongs to them. These are His children.

While we can't see them every day, we need to be faithful in the priorities the Lord has. We can live our lives in a way that we worship and serve and love Him. That's our first priority. We do what we can do, and as for when our school will reopen or what that will look like... we're trusting God to care for us and lead us when that time comes.



Since 2004, Julianna has lived in Guatemala and led the work of Global Shore Opportunities on the ground, while also drinking good coffee, eating good food, baking excellent desserts and enjoying life with her husband, Jacobo, and their children.

For the latest information on our school status and the coronavirus in Guatemala, you can visit globalshore.org/coronavirus.



STARTING IN GRATITUDE

Thank you to all of you who have prayed for our ministry and partnered with us financially in 2020. **We raised just over \$75,000 in our year-end campaign** and we're thankful to God for you.

We feel ready for whatever 2021 may bring, but if 2020 taught us anything, it's that we're called first and foremost to be faithful to God's call, trusting He will work no matter what comes.

We believe that God is going to work for good this year, and believe that He has good things in store for you too.



CLASSES IN THE NEW YEAR

While we were unable to start in-person classes in January, we don't know if permission for social-distanced classes will be granted next week or next month, or how the situation in Guatemala will unfold.

Please pray with us for students who are in difficult home situations, and that we could have a quick and safe reopening so that students who depend on our school can return to this place of safety, learning and transformation. You can always visit globalshore.org/coronavirus to read our latest updates about school openings.



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