



Ben and Katy Ray

Link Letter no. 32 | November 2023

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Location: Tanzania



What we do: Showing God's love and changing attitudes in the community through providing training and employment for disabled people

Dear friends,

When we last wrote, we were full of excitement for the new, but also a sense of loss for the people and place we'd left behind.

Before we get further into our letter, we have some **news to share**. As we look towards the end of 2023, **we want to thank you wholeheartedly** for supporting us – your prayers and gifts are incredibly important in helping us to serve here. With a heavy heart, we need to share that at the moment, due to increased living costs both for us and our supporters, **there is a significant shortfall in our funding**, which puts our work at risk. And so, we come to you for further help. If you are not currently giving, would you be able to start a regular gift? And if you are giving, would you consider increasing your gift? **If everyone reading this letter gave an extra £15 per month, that would make a huge difference.** If you can help us close our funding gap, please go to churchmissionsociety.org/ray, call 01865 787489 or complete the enclosed form if you have received this letter through the post. (For our supporting churches, if you are able to give a further gift please contact churchrelations@churchmissionsociety.org.) We understand this might not be possible – **please know that we greatly value your support**, and thank you for letting us share our challenge with you.



Alessia hanging out with her new friend

We've now been in Usa River for three months and the Lord has been so good in so many ways. Importantly for us, our children have taken to their new school as if it was built just for them.

The two of us have recently had time and space to reflect, pray and be still – not things that come naturally! At times it's felt like a painful detox from things it's so easy to build one's identity upon. Previously, we had defined roles, a community of friends and colleagues close by and so many resources to call on to make things happen. For a while, we've had none of these, but instead a deepening awareness of how dependent we are on God's daily grace for us. During this time, the Lord has been gradually percolating a vision through us for our new work with SAFI Tanzania.

See Ability First International, SAFI

A number of people have asked us to explain how our roles are now working and even if we are still part of CMS. As I hope you can tell from the link letter, we're still CMS mission partners! Rather than being sent to serve through the Anglican Diocese of Ruaha (which owns Neema Crafts), CMS have now seconded us to an international NGO called SAFI Tanzania. *Safi* means pure, and also "great" in Kiswahili slang. This NGO was born out of the need to support Neema Crafts through the COVID years and now (as well as continuing to collaborate with Neema), it has begun to reach out to other projects across Tanzania working to promote livelihoods for people with disabilities.

Support Ben and Katy:
churchmissionsociety.org/ray

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



We've been greatly encouraged by the way the Lord has begun to create links and networks to projects around the country. Just this month, we began collaborating with new partners in Dar es Salaam and soon expect to have projects in other major cities. We've also begun to work two days a week at a wonderful centre right on our doorstep called the Usa River Rehabilitation Centre, or Tanz Hands.

URRC – Tanz Hands

This large institution offers vocational training, physical therapy, rehabilitation and even has a small secondary school for young people with various disabilities. Through SAFI, we are working at URRC two days a week to share ideas and advice on their various courses and enterprises. We've recently enjoyed bringing new Christmas designs to their SETU class (a creative program for young adults with special educational needs), who produce beaded and painted items for resale. It has been so special to be greeted with hugs and smiles by these lovely young people and just what we've needed!

Finding our own space

As we've mulled over different models and concepts for our new venture with SAFI, it's become clear to us that we need a physical place from which to operate, but we've been fairly dismayed by prices for plots of land locally. It was with some interest then, that while at a women's prayer group recently, Katy overheard a local lodge owner wondering what she could do with their excess space.

Since that time, we've met with the owners (a wonderful Christian family) to see if there is a way that SAFI Tanzania could develop a project with them. Incredibly, the land they have is almost exactly where we would have chosen to place our work. Also, the ideas that we have for its use seem to dovetail well with what they were hoping for – God is good, please keep praying!

The emerging vision

A concept that's been on our hearts for some time is to create a hub for design and business development for people with disabilities. We've seen the crafts industry improve in many ways over the years here, but there is still so much opportunity for small producers to develop the quality of their products and presentation to the market. Using our experience, we'd love to support producers around the country, through holistic training courses which develop their skills, products and understanding of God's grace for them.

In addition to a creative training space and new crafts shop, we've noticed the need here for a Neema-style, deaf-run cafe. These things would not only produce revenue for the social enterprise, but create further jobs for people with disabilities and enable tourists and locals to interact with people with disabilities. Finally (for now!), we'd like the space we create to double up as a community hub and more specifically, as a place for a church to gather on Sundays. Please pray with us as we explore these ideas and ask that God would provide the resources and connections we need to bring his purposes about.

A Christmas wish

In these darkening days, we pray for each of you, that the light of God's love for you would burn more brightly in your homes this Christmas. We pray that you'd be more aware of Jesus in your midst and more dazzled by his grace for you and his people throughout the world.

With love and blessings,

Ben and Katy X

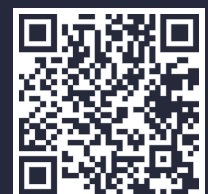


Photos from top to bottom: Katy teaching new ideas; Herbert with his Christmas mobile; Abel finishes some wooden Christmas ornaments; Rose and her Christmas star



Can you help?

Right now Ben and Katy are facing a shortfall in funding, which puts their work at risk. Will you support them today? Go to churchmissionsociety.org/ray, call 01865 787489 or complete the enclosed form. Thank you!



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

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