

Ben and Katy Ray

Link Letter no. 21 | March 2019

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The call in action

Dear friends,

We write to you in the midst of a struggle. In December, after two very successful Christmas markets, we concluded that we should try to step out from beyond the centre here in Iringa, starting with a shop in Dar es Salaam. However, since we made this decision, we have had to face discouragement on many fronts.

The main hurdle has come in the form of work and residency permits. We have had to deal with heightened bureaucracy and hefty charges for our own permits and our wonderful volunteer, Liz, has struggled to obtain the right visa for her role. Please pray, especially that there is still a way for her to fulfil her aim of training a Tanzanian graduate in much of Katy's role.

To enable Neema Crafts to branch out across the country, we would like to set-up a trading arm under the diocese, but this option seems tricky in uncertain times. We are consulting the best legal advice to ensure that the lengthy process is done correctly; please pray for wisdom and good counsel in this.

At Neema, we have spent the first weeks of 2019 working on accounts that we needed to catch up on after we sadly had to lose a number of our office colleagues last year. At home, both children have suffered one virus after another and we have had many disrupted nights of sleep.

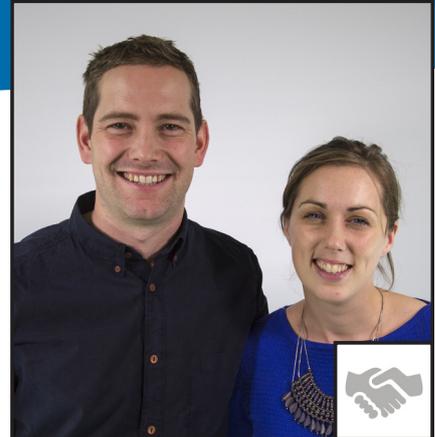
However, despite all of this, we know that God is in control and there are many things to celebrate. Praise God that almost all of the 57 staff homes have now been connected to the Iringa Urban water supply (see photo below). Our year end figures show that our overall profit for the year was almost 10 per cent better than the year before. We are excited about training up a Tanzanian graduate in the new role of operations manager (please pray for the right candidate). This new role will be necessary as Katy will have to look after our other good news – we are having a baby girl!

Summer in the UK

As with Zachary and Alessia, we intend to have our third baby in the UK. Katy will be travelling back in mid-May, which is the latest she can fly with her due date being June 16. I will be joining a few weeks later. We are delighted that Irene and Malcolm Crawford have agreed to steer the ship while we are away until mid August. Not only are they excellent interim managers, but they are kindly leaving us their house and car again!

We would like to fit in a few church visits during our time, so do let us know if you'd like us to come and visit. There'll only be a few weekends free. Katy and baby may need to stay at home, but Zachary, Alessia (and I) should be available for updates!

With Zachary now attending the local international school

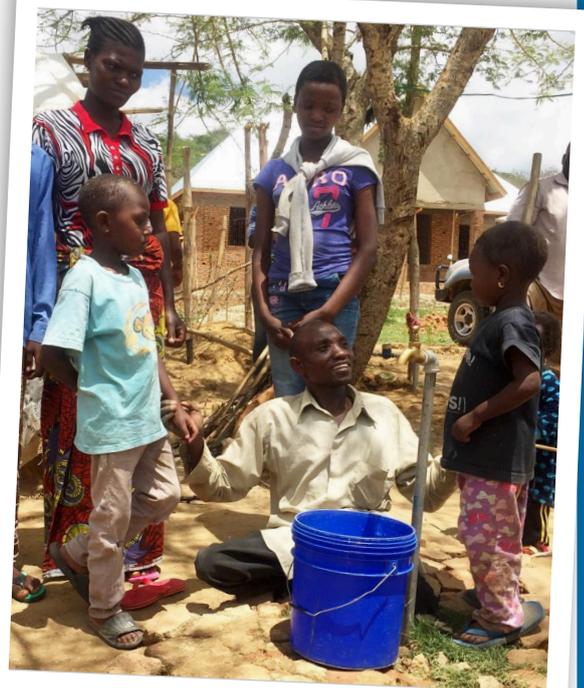


Name: Ben and Katy Ray

Location: Iringa, Tanzania

Our call: To show God's love for the most marginalised in Tanzania by providing training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Our role: Directors of the Neema Crafts Centre for people with disabilities.



Kasim celebrates water at his home

Continued over the page

and our family growing, our outgoings have significantly increased. CMS have told us that our fund balance is now not on target for the year. Please could you discuss with your church whether they can review our support for 2019/20, so that our work can continue here in Tanzania? Alternatively, details for individual support can be found at churchmissionsociety.org/ray or you can email Paul Read at paul.read@churchmissionsociety.org

We want to end this letter by sharing a really beautiful story, of triumph over adversity and why Neema Crafts is so crucial.

Aurelia's Story

"I was born a healthy child; however, my family was very poor. At the age of two, my sister and I were sent to live with our grandmother so that my parents could work, but sadly my mother died when I was just five years old. I was grateful to be able to attend school and completed 7th grade (aged 15). On leaving school I got a job working as a house lady, helping with cooking, cleaning and washing.

"I continued this job for several years, got married and had two children. My husband and I used our savings to build a small house on our shamba (field) and we moved to live there. However, our stove caught fire one night. We had a straw roof which burnt easily, and the walls began to collapse. My husband managed to escape with one of our children and he pulled me out; however, my legs were already extremely badly burnt. Our youngest son was trapped under the rubble and didn't survive.

"I went to hospital, but there was nothing they could do to save my legs and so they had to be amputated. This was a very hard time for me and I thought I might go crazy. I spent a total of six months in hospital. However, it was during this time that I had the opportunity to visit Neema Crafts. It was so encouraging for me to see other disabled people working with a purpose and it took my mind off my troubles. I couldn't believe it when I had the opportunity to attend the tailoring course at Neema and was offered a job.

"Now I have been working here for three years and I am so happy. The job has helped me to grow in confidence and I love the work and my friends here. I can also support my three children and the oldest is now attending school. I really think that without this job I would probably be dead; my family are so poor and they would not have been able to support me."

Aurelia has recently had her third child, who attends the Neema Crafts nursery, and in a year's time she can apply for a home to be built for her and her family. Thank God for women like Aurelia, whose struggles make our own seem very simple and whose joyful work in our tailoring department make our efforts worthwhile.

With many thanks for your ongoing support and prayers,
Ben and Katy x

Photos from top to bottom: Aurelia, the Neema Crafts tailor; Neema cafe waiters; Isaiah working in Neema carpentry; a fox and a hound!



THE LATEST FROM CHURCH MISSION SOCIETY

Transformation in Tanzania: If you've enjoyed this letter, you might also be interested in a recent story about local partner Paul Kibona, who oversees CMS-Africa's Samaritan Strategy training in Tanzania. Read about how they have trained over 5,000 people at churchmissionsociety.org/transformation

If you would like to discuss your mailings with us or to receive this link letter on a regular basis, please email supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org or call 01865 787400

You can give to Ben and Katy at:
churchmissionsociety.org/ray

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