



Ben and Katy Ray

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Location: Tanzania



What we do: Working with people with disabilities, providing training so they can earn a living



Equipping and encouraging where followers of Jesus are in a minority

Dear friends,

Heri ya mwaka mpya! Happy New Year!

We are feeling so blessed to have been back in the UK for our first Christmas in eight years. The children were thrilled to experience a cold Christmas, and although we missed out on snow, the three weeks back could not have been more special. We were especially grateful for precious time with wider family and grandparents, some of whom have not been in good health.

The opportunity to return to England arose because of the post-election civil unrest across Tanzania in October. Maji ya Chai, the town nearest our home, was particularly affected, with several people killed and injured during clashes. This all unfolded while Katy's sister and her family were visiting us. Roads were blocked, flights cancelled, and we had to find a safe route to get them to the airport. Although we did have an unpleasant altercation en route, we're grateful that everyone was kept safe and they caught their flight.

Protesters also gathered directly outside our new SAFI Centre. Thankfully, it escaped with only a few broken windows, and none of our staff were injured. But because further unrest was planned for 9 December, many expatriates were choosing to leave the country. For this reason, CMS graciously agreed that we too could return to the UK from 8–28 December.

Tanzania is known as one of the most peaceful countries in Africa, so these disturbances came as a surprise to everyone. Although calm has returned, please pray for wise leadership, dialogue, and healing as the nation recovers.

SAFI Cafe open

After months of delays and frustrations, the SAFI deaf-run cafe and crafts shop finally opened its doors to the public on 8 October. Neither Katy nor I could have imagined things going as well as they have. So many people have told us, "This is just what Usa River needed!" and we have been greatly encouraged by how warmly customers engage with our deaf waiters and staff.

Gideon, our new (hearing) project manager, was slightly put out when an elderly customer told him, "No, I do not need your help. Go away. I want to speak in sign language." Much of the cafe is in the garden, and Fidelis, our gardener and guard, has created such a beautiful outdoor space that lunchtime at SAFI can often feel quite wedding-like. The best thing about the cafe though is how the Lord has provided just the right people. On literally our second day of opening, when we realised we desperately needed more waiters, Laeda and Moses



Back for Christmas 2025

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appeared at our doors and have already become much-loved members of the SAFI Cafe team, along with Adolph, our head chef, and Gloria, our lead barista.

Gloria's story

Gloria was born in Moshi as a hearing child. She became seriously ill at just two years old with a high fever and severe throat pain. Although she recovered, her hearing never fully returned, and her life changed forever.

At five, Gloria joined a Catholic primary school that included deaf students. Despite her determination, the lack of proper translation and support meant she relied heavily on hearing classmates. The same challenges followed her into secondary school.

Although she loved learning, she was unable to pass her Form Four exams and was forced to leave school at sixteen.

Determined to gain practical skills, Gloria enrolled at VETA in Moshi, studying tailoring and basic computer skills. After graduating, she moved with her mother to Arusha, helping run a small second-hand clothing business. Life became increasingly strained, especially when her brother began university.

At 22, Gloria became pregnant. Although her partner initially welcomed their daughter, he soon left and never returned. For several years, Gloria stayed at home, raising her child with only her mother's support.

Everything changed in October 2025 when Gloria joined the team at the SAFI Tanzania Centre. She learned barista skills, hospitality service and customer care in an environment where sign language is celebrated.

Where she once depended on 20,000 shillings a week from her family, she now earns up to 400,000 shillings per month through wages and tips. This income has transformed her life. What Gloria loves most about SAFI is the community and daily devotions. She has found skills, income, confidence and belonging.

Future plans

We currently have 26 deaf and physically disabled participants training at the SAFI Centre, and in 2026 we plan to train 50 more. This work can only continue if we have a secure space in which to grow. Our current land is rented, but amazingly, two acres have become available for purchase right next door. This is a rare opportunity to secure the perfect long-term location in SAFI's name. Please pray that we can convince the seller to hold the plot for us and that the funds will come together in the months ahead.

Family news

Praise God our three children continue to flourish at school. Zachary has made a close friend who shares his passion for wildlife photography. Before Christmas they ran their own stall at the school bazaar selling framed prints.

After a joyful New Year's Eve party, we returned home to quite a shocking scene. While we were out, two bushpigs broke into the garden and attacked our dogs. One dog escaped, but our older dog Rocky stood his ground and was badly gored, losing his front teeth too. He survived only because a brave guard intervened.

Rocky is now recovering well and we've received plenty of advice from experienced hunters about dealing with future visitors. Please do pray for our children who are still a bit spooked by the experience.

With love and blessings, Ben and Katy x



Photos from top to bottom: Checking the sourdough with Shadrack, Rahel and Adolph; Gloria in the SAFI cafe; the garden cafe; Ben and Julia visit Rocky at the vet's



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We've been encouraged to hear from others who are part of our wider area of work. In India, growing hostility towards Christians leads church pastors to trek into the hills to meet with and disciple one another. And in the Middle East, women are leading other women from Muslim backgrounds to faith in Jesus. Read more at churchmissionsociety.org/equip

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