

Rich Tarro, Kenya – Advent 2023

‘No room in the inn’

In St. Luke’s Nativity story, we hear that there was “no room in the inn” for Mary, Joseph and the newborn Jesus (Lk 2:7). Many homilies talk about how we fail to make room for Jesus in our hearts. However, this passage also reminds us that Jesus came to us as a helpless and vulnerable infant. He took on our humanity with all its difficulties and sufferings in the humblest of circumstances.

In my ministry, I see on a daily basis people for whom there is no room in the inn. The people I work with live on the margins of society, with no societal safety net, left to fend for themselves. It is even more difficult for the children and youth who have no adults to support them. During my time in Kenya, our HOPE Project has supported a few of these so-called child-headed families.



Emmanuel outside his old house

Emmanuel and Isaiah are two good-natured and well-mannered brothers who, for all intents and purposes, live alone. They have some family who live close by — an uncle and a grandmother who is nominally their legal guardian — but they receive little support from them. The brothers live alone in an informal settlement of Mombasa in a house that belonged to their now-deceased parents. We support them in school and with food, as they are both still in school and have no income. Emmanuel just finished his third year of high school and Isaiah his first.



The boys’ new house with a new roof

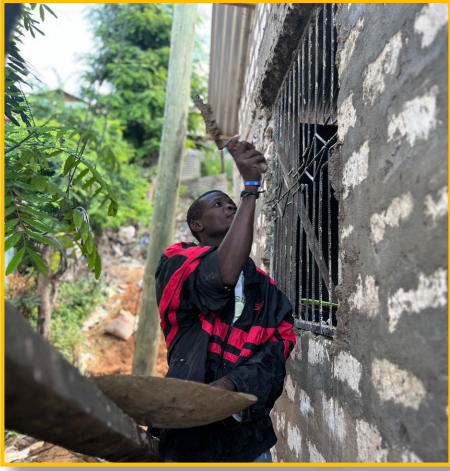
Emmanuel and Isaiah’s father passed away several years ago when the two boys were very young, and they were being raised by a single mother. Desperate for work and unable to find a job in Kenya, their mother went to Saudi Arabia three years ago to try to earn money. This is the point at which we learned about the two boys, accepted them into the HOPE Project and began supporting them in school. As they did not get much support from their relatives, we also started helping Emmanuel and Isaiah with food.

Tragically, their mother was murdered last year, leaving the two boys without a parent and living on their own. With no means to support themselves, we began providing the boys with additional food on a regular basis as they were often going without meals.

The mud house in which they were living was collapsing and in desperate need of repair. As part of our effort to improve the lives of our HOPE families, this year we began a program of refurbishing the homes of some of our students — in addition to providing students and their families with beds, mattresses, cooking units and solar lights.

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Installation of window grilles

Earlier this year we rebuilt a collapsing wall in the home of several of our students who live with their widowed mother. We also rebuilt the bedroom of another student, who lives with her father and brothers, that was crumbling. We were able to make incremental improvements to these other homes, but the home of Emmanuel and Isaiah was beyond repair. The whole structure needed to be completely demolished and rebuilt.

It took about a month to complete the demolition of the collapsing structure and build the new house. I wish I could say it say it was all smooth sailing, but we ran into a few bumps along the road. However, in the end, we got the house finished, and Emmanuel and Isaiah moved into their new home.

Like the old house, the new house includes a room with a separate entrance that can be rented out. There was a tenant in the previous house, but he was forced to move out because of the house's structural collapse.

The additional room will provide the boys with a little income.

We will continue to pay for Emmanuel and Isaiah's school expenses and provide them with food. We also plan to give them a bed as they currently only have one.

Our top priority is to help Emmanuel and Isaiah finish their education. Emmanuel has one more year left of high school, and Isaiah has three more years remaining.

Emmanuel is very creative and likes telling stories through writing and videos. He and his friends have created several videos which portray the plight of youth in Kenya. You can watch their video about the building of Emmanuel and Isaiah's home at youtube.com/shorts/TwCtSSB4IIM. Their other videos are on our HOPE Project YouTube channel at youtube.com/@hopegiveshope.



Emmanuel and Isaiah inside their new home

After finishing high school, Emmanuel would like to be a journalist and content creator. We plan to assist him in college to help him meet this goal. Isaiah would like to study motor vehicle mechanics after finishing high school. We hope to not only support him in motor vehicle mechanics school, but also to someday assist him in starting a business repairing vehicles.

As with all our students, we want to give Emmanuel and Isaiah the education and opportunities to have happy and productive lives. There may not always be "room in the inn" for children like Emmanuel and Isaiah, but with your help, we can build them their own inn. Thank you to everyone who makes this important work possible!

God is good. Merry Christmas,
Rich

Please support our HOPE Project. To **donate by MAIL**, return the bottom portion of this letter with your payment in the envelope. You can also **donate ONLINE** at tinyurl.com/2023-hope-project.

I invite you to **walk with me as a "COMPANION IN MISSION."** Companions in Mission are friends who give financial gifts on a regular (usually monthly) basis. For more info, visit mklm.org/become-a-companion-in-mission. Thank you so much for your generosity!

More about HOPE Project at mklm.org/tag/rich-tarro/, HOPEgivesHOPE.com, or facebook.com/rich.tarro.

TEAR

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