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A Mud House

by Nancy McCormick

I recently traveled to Kenya, East Africa, with an organization called Friends Bringing Hope (FBH). This small group of Iowa Quakers assists widow's groups with micro-business endeavors. FBH helps pay school fees for children in need, builds mud homes for women, and assists in other needs that come along. Karen Bauer is the founder of this group. She is a friend of mine and for several years has invited me to take this trip. I was thrilled when the way to go to Kenya opened for me in February and March. Monetary gifts, air travel miles and a lot of emotional support came my way and made the trip possible for me. Before I knew it, I was packed and ready to go. This journey was a way to celebrate my mother's life who had passed away in August. I wanted to say "Thank You" to my mom and build a mud home in her memory.



All photos courtesy of Nancy McCormick.

When Karen sent me material regarding building mud homes in Kenya, my question to my husband was "Mike, is it time for me to go and help women receive the blessing of being in their own home?" Mike and I have been building our own home for the past four years. We have been the contractors, carpenters, architects and landscape engineers. Living in our own home for the first time in our 40 year marriage is an incredible blessing. We do not take this blessing lightly.

The small intimate group of Friends Bringing Hope was able to raise enough money to erect five homes costing \$500.00 each. This gave us much cause to celebrate. Being present with women who would receive shelter from the elements as well as elevating their status in their communities was an awesome experience.

Each home was a simple structure, approximately 15 x 20 feet which includes two rooms, a metal roof, windows and doors. Much of the work was complete by the time we

arrived on the building site. This left more time for us to celebrate with the women and hear how they were doing in their local micro business endeavors. Local carpenters had erected the pole frame and the metal roofs. The Friend's Rural Service organization, women, and local community members worked hard at making the mud and getting the building project up and running. When we arrived, we completed the house in celebratory fashion as women greeted us with songs, prayers, hugs and bountiful plates of food. We carried housewarming gifts of mattresses, blankets, etc. We took seeds for planting and fun objects for the children. We visited with one another, listened to their stories and offered encouragement. All of these women were in dire need of a stable environment even though their ages and stories varied. All received a boost to their self-esteem and their status by receiving their own home.



I traveled to Kenya because I felt a strong desire to travel with Karen and visit the women in this part of our world; however one does not need to travel to a distant land to offer a hand to someone in need. The gift of kindness and compassion can be given wherever we are.

As I stand inside my home (still a work in progress) and look at my front yard, I see blue birds fluttering all about filling my spirit with joy as I listen to their lush songs. I am reminded of the blessing having adequate shelter brings to people. In my mind's eye I can see all those who arrived at our homesite with paintbrushes, hammers, trowels, and food as they offered their gifts of labor to Mike and me. I recall how this bolstered and encouraged us.

I would like to close with the words to the following hymn:

I Then Shall Live

I then shall live as one who's learned compassion;
 I've been so loved that I'll risk loving, too.
 I know how fear builds walls instead of bridges;
 I dare to see another's point of view.
 And when relationships demand commitment,
 then I'll be there to care and follow through.



Nancy McCormick lives in Southeastern Ohio on a draft horse farm with her husband Mike. It is their desire that this farm bring Hope, Peace and Love to all who enter. Nancy is a Quaker Pastor who is released to do ministry as a GOOD NEWS Associate. Nancy loves to minister to the elderly through prayer, presence and song; she listens to their life stories and sings to them and with them. Nancy is the author of *God is All Around*, a collection of stories and songs from her ministry.

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