Signs for Hope

Liberia 2010!

Summer 2010 – Newsletter

The dream for this journey to Liberia began more than a year ago. After numerous random God-connections with those who work with/for—or have adopted—deaf orphans in Liberia I was able to finally be face-to-face with some of the most precious children in the world; albeit the least of the least.

As we drove down the dirt road filled with potholes to the Deaf Mission on Tuesday, June 22nd I was filled with anticipation, excitement and a little reserve. Our van driver, Joseph, began honking the horn as we approached—as he had done when we entered the grounds of the Daniel Hoover Village Mission (DHVM) the day before. However, none of the children ran out of the home to greet us— until they saw us pull up.

Seated in the back of the van I did not have a clear shot of the children when we arrived so I handed my camera to someone who did. As the kids opened the side van door I could see one boy's face that was overcome with emotion at our being there, which caused me to tear up instantly. As soon as we were all able to exit the van I began introducing myself to each of the children. The manual alphabet in Liberia is exactly the same as the manual alphabet in American Sign Language (ASL)—thank the LORD! Needless to say I could not remember all their names or name signs they taught me, but they were eager to share them again and again.

We took a quick tour of the Deaf Mission which houses more than 60 deaf children (ages range from 6 to around 24) and Pastor Harrington Jududo and his family; the Deaf Mission Director (he and his family are hearing). Two classrooms are also located within this single building. Instantly, we were struck by how nice things appeared on the outside as opposed to the inside of this building. It was evident that the living conditions here were much worse than the DHVM. The bunk beds were broken down and many children were sleeping on the floor on mildewed mattresses. And there were no mosquito nets to protect them from the dreaded Malaria bearing mosquitoes.

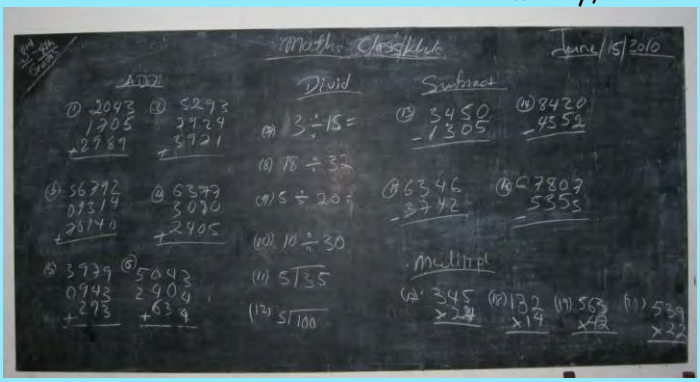
The most heart breaking experience for me on this trip was when we were told that the children only receive one meal a day at the Deaf Mission. On Tuesday their meal consisted of a bowl of rice. However, on Thursday they had some additional sustenance of soup with Cassava Root and other ingredients on top of the rice (see photo, right). I was struck by several children who asked me if I wanted to share some of their rice. I quickly said thank you, but that I would wait to eat that evening instead.

When asked about this, Pastor Harrington told us that near the end of the month things become very tight and that was the reason they only had rice on Tuesday. Pastor Harrington also told us that there were as many as 20 children coming from the nearby village to eat daily. He says there is no way he can turn them away when they have even

less to eat than his family and the deaf children do. This reminds me of a statement that was made while we were in Liberia. I am not sure who made the statement originally, but we quoted it in some form or another throughout the week as we saw it evidenced time and time again; "You have nothing, until you are willing to share it."

In sharp contrast to the lack of food, beds, bedding and protection from mosquitoes I was pleasantly surprised by the educational level of these children. Some of the children were completing their final exams for the school year when we arrived on Tuesday. Below you see the chalkboard with math questions for the 3rd & 4th Grades exam.

The children at the Deaf Mission have two deaf teachers. I met them both and not only was impressed by their desire to see these children excel academically, but they were also concerned with their spiritual lives as well. I



was involved in a conversation they were having with one of the young deaf men. This young man is Muslim, but his two teachers were clearly explaining to him—while others looked on—about the need to receive Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as his personal Savior. They explained the need for the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse him from his sins and that Jesus was truly the only way to Heaven and that was not something the Muslim faith embraced. The young man calmly accepted all the information and appeared to contemplate what he was told. I was impressed by his attitude and his obvious respect for his teachers. My husband and I have decided to **sponsor** this young man and are praying daily for God to reveal His truth to him.

Pastor Harrington told us of his desire to build and staff a Vocational Center at the Deaf Mission. This would give the deaf children the ability to not only learn a vocation as they grow to adulthood, but also the opportunity to leave the Deaf Mission becoming an asset to Liberian society. **Join me in praying this will come to fruition soon.**

Despite the hardships and the lack of—what we call—daily needs, the Liberian's faith is on a level you and I know nothing about. Here in America, most of us really do not have any need to ask our Heavenly Father for our "daily bread", but in Liberia they do that every day and can look back and see His continual faithfulness to them. Certainly much of what you and I think are *needs,* here in America, are *luxuries* in Liberia.

Angel Rutledge (Christian Adoption Services, Liberia Director & our team leader) knew there would be many needs identified while we were in Liberia, therefore funds were raised by team members—specifically for these needs to be met—before we ever left the states. At the Deaf Mission some of those funds were left to cover the building of new bunk beds and the purchasing of new mattresses, bedding, and mosquito nets. With whatever is left teacher salaries that are past due (as much as six weeks behind) and additional foods will be subsidized.

Some of the other initiatives, in addition to daily VBS, that were accomplished while the ten of us were in Liberia included:

1) Updating all sponsorship information for each child at DHVM and the Deaf Home (over 200 altogether) **http://www.africanchildsponsorship.com/home/21.cfm**

1) Planting Moringa Trees at the Deaf Mission http://www.miracletrees.org

2) Helping establish a Liberian run bakery business for the village surrounding the DHVM

3) Repairing of the water mill at the DHVM

4) Teaching the older girls at the DHVM and the ladies at the ACFI Guest House how to create paper beads and make jewelry from their creations. The excitement this inspired—especially for the older girls at the DHVM—was so encouraging to see. This is a craft that is not readily available in Liberia and it is hoped it will become a well known art providing these ladies with much needed income in the future. *I would love to teach this craft technique to the older deaf girls at the Deaf Mission on my next trip to Liberia.*

Some of you partnered with me in this trip to Liberia by praying diligently for me. Some of you also partnered with me financially. The words, *thank you,* are not adequate—however I pray that our Lord will be the one to thank you sufficiently for all that you have done.

On page two of this newsletter I shared with you that my husband and I have begun sponsoring a young man at the Deaf Mission. If your heart has been touched by the stories I have shared about these deaf children in Liberia and you want to tangibly impact them, as well, sponsorship is a great way to do so. For $40 per month you can begin providing food, medical supplies, teacher salaries, etc for the children at the Deaf Mission. You can be assured that your monies will go for what is stated. Simply click on the website address listed under #1 above to learn, in detail, about sponsoring a child at the Deaf Mission. If you have additional questions about this process or about anything else regarding my trip to Liberia, please do not hesitate to contact me.

One last comment concerning adoptions in Liberia; the government is extremely slow in lifting the moratorium on adoptions. Two of the families with us in Liberia had their adopted Liberian children staying with us at the ACFI Guest House all week; basically they went with us everywhere we went. These parents have been granted legal parental rights for these children by a Liberian court, however they will not release them to be taken home to America by their parents. This meant that when we left Liberia on Friday afternoon, these parents had to say good-bye to their children. This was the 2nd most heart wrenching experience I had while in Liberia. **Please pray for God to work mightily among the government officials of Liberia to at least allow those children who have been legally adopted by American families to be released to those families ASAP.**

While the above information only scratches the surface of all that took place during Liberia 2010, there are other things going on with *Signs for Hope* that I want to share with you in this newsletter. One of the most exciting is the impending contract with a local professional Christian website design consulting company (Cube Creative Design & Consulting) to design and launch the *Signs for Hope* website. They have agreed to do everything I have requested for $900. This is a special rate they only offer non-profits. I have already seen some of their preliminary work and I am very pleased with what I have seen. I had received a proposal from a different website design firm just prior to leaving for Liberia in which they quoted me the price of $11,000+ for what I requested. Needless to say, I was so excited and thankful to find someone willing to do the same work for the more than reasonable price of $900. One of my weekly prayer partners at Moms In Touch provided me with Adam's contact information. We are trusting that the Lord will provide the needed funds for this endeavor and if He so leads you to partner with us you may mail your check payable to *Signs for Hope,* PO Box 460, Fairview, NC 28730. As soon as the website is launched, any and all future donations can be made directly through the website securely.

In the spring newsletter I told you I would be informing you about the next community orphan care event being planned for the fall of 2011, here in Asheville, NC. While details cannot be shared just yet, the plan for bringing in presenter(s) for training foster and adoptive families—equipping them to improve their parenting skills—is underway. As soon as plans are finalized they will be revealed. While this event will be offered primarily for foster and adoptive families it will also provide great training opportunities for other parents and teachers, as well. **Please pray for God to open the doors for these plans to be finalized with desired presenter(s).**

Additional prayer requests:

1) The search for *Signs for Hope* board members continues. Please continue to pray for this process and that it can be finalized ASAP; in His perfect timing.

2) Please pray for those families that have contacted me and are open to adopting deaf/HOH children or are in the process of adopting deaf/HOH children domestically or intercountry. These families are in TX, IA, IL, NC (2), SC, and KY.

3) Please pray for Adam (Creative Cube Design & Consulting) and me as we work together to design the *Signs for Hope* website.

4) Pray for many sponsors to be willing to commit to support the children at the Deaf Mission in Liberia. I want to provide them with at least 2 meals a day…don't you?

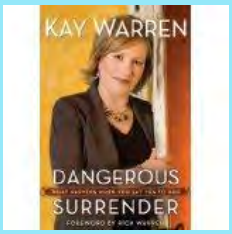
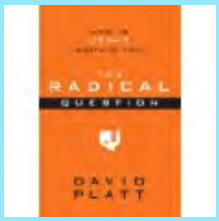
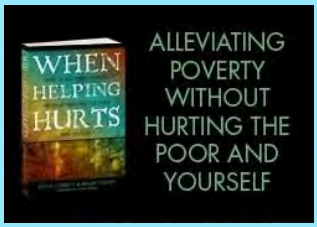
5) I will be seeking to enlist the help of other faith-based organizations to come to the aid of deaf orphans in Liberia. Please pray for God to lead me to the right one(s) and for Him to have prepared their hearts when I approach them.

Once again allow me to remind you that I cannot do what God has called me to do—"coordinate the adoption of deaf orphans in the world"—without your partnering with me. You are a vital part of this ministry no matter what level of involvement you might hold. Let me encourage you to follow God's lead on how you are involved with *Signs for Hope*. Maybe you simply pray for *SFH* when you receive this newsletter four times each year. Maybe you pass this information on to someone else you know. Maybe you pray for *SFH* each time God brings us to your mind. Maybe you email me with encouragement to persevere. Maybe you and I meet together face-to-face to chat about all God is doing. Maybe you pray for *SFH* daily. Maybe you give financially to *SFH*, occasionally or monthly. Or maybe you do all of the above. Whatever God leads you to do is exactly what *SFH* needs you to do in order to accomplish what God has "prepared in advance for us to do".

In closing I am compelled to share with you a verse that God is continually placing before me these days.

Once our eyes are opened we cannot pretend we don't know what to do. God who weighs our hearts, and keeps our souls, knows that we know and holds us responsible to act.
Proverbs 24:12

While I know that the motivation behind my desire to obey my Lord's commands should be out of overwhelming love and gratitude for all He has done for me, this verse reminds me that the God who created all that we can see and all that we cannot see will hold us accountable for what we know to be right to do, but do not do it. I pray that when our Lord returns He will find us faithfully obeying his commands and in so doing impacting this world with the love of Jesus Christ.

Below are some of the books that are challenging me daily. *"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."* Galatians 6:9

Until He returns, *Becky*