Signs for Hope

Fall 2011 Newsletter

Fall in Western North Carolina always provides a magnificent display of color. This year was no different. The bright reds and deep burgundys seem to attract my attention more than all of the others. For me, this is a reminder of the sacrifice that Jesus made for me as He so willingly gave of His perfect, innocent blood; His very life, for one so unworthy... me.

This fall has been filled with so many opportunities to praise my Lord for His never-ending faithfulness. From the very beginning in 2008, on numerous occasions, people tell me I should be writing all this down. There just does not seem to be enough time to do everything I feel compelled to do and do it well and write it all down at the same time. I am sure you feel the same as I do about time restraints, especially as it relates to His service and ministry. Thankfully, our Lord never feels those time restraints and He can always accomplish ALL that He needs/plans to do, without wasting any time, and at just the right time. If I will only allow Him the ability to accomplish what He wants through me, then my time will be well spent for His glory. Pray I can submit to His plans, His ways, in His timing, without interjecting my own.

Sometimes people ask, "Just what is it that you do?" In an effort to try and give a concise answer I decided to stop and give this some thought. I have tried to categorize my activities in three areas to give you a glimpse into how I spend my time.

The first area is *Research.* Research demands much of my time. My research, mostly via the Internet or through email correspondence, encompasses the vast topics of adoption, including deaf/HOH adoption, deaf education, and identifying valuable resources available for parents adopting and raising deaf children. Preparing this information for posting on the *Signs for Hope* website, in a user-friendly way, is a priority. I have been asked, by two different organizations, to develop a training workshop for families desiring to pursue the adoption of deaf/HOH children. Recently, this has also become a priority for me. As I have shared before, *Signs for Hope* believes it is vitally important for all of these families, Deaf and hearing, to be as prepared and equipped as possible BEFORE they bring their children home. This preparation will give them the tools necessary to deal with the many challenges these precious children might be dealing with given their history, as well as, knowing in advance what resources the families have available to them for helping their children and families thrive. The tentative title for this workshop is: *Adopting Deaf: Hearing their need with your heart.* Please pray I can condense all the vast information that is available into a palatable *beginner's* workshop for families contemplating adopting deaf/HOH children.

The second area that vies for my time is *Support*. The category of *Support* has many facets. One is the day-to-day contact I have with the families—who have contacted me or who God has led me to—on their personal journeys of adoption of deaf/HOH children. Recently, the number of these families has increased and I suspect those numbers will continue to climb. No doubt, this is where God desires for me to spend much time, as He is the One leading these God-connections. Most of you know that I have no personal experience with adoption, as God has not called Charles and me to adopt, up to this point in time anyway. I am learning many things about the, sometimes overwhelming and often frustrating, adoption process as I walk with these

families through this new and challenging experience. God has connected me to a few reliable Christian organizations and individuals, involved in varying aspects of adoption, and they have become a great resource for me as I try to become better educated in this process. Their willingness to assist me in this process is truly a *God-send*. To be sure, adoption is a faith-builder. My *Research* often benefits this *Support,* as well.

Support also includes prayer support for these families. I have begun sharing some of these specific requests with a small group of *Signs for Hope* friends who pray diligently and confidentially, by name and by need, as they are shared with me. Prayer during adoption is vitally important for these families to be able to discern God's plan and grant them encouragement to persevere throughout this process. Once these families bring their sons and daughters home, the prayers do not stop, instead the opportunity to continue praying for them throughout this life-long journey of adoption continues.

In addition, *Support* includes helping families discover creative ways to reach their adoption funding goals. Providing up-to-date resources in the area of funding adoptions, on the *SfH* website, is also a priority. Just recently, seven of us from the newly established Asheville Deaf Church attended a BBQ fundraiser for a Deaf couple in Morganton, NC—I have been working /walking alongside this couple for almost a year. This event was hosted by the couple's home-church. I love to see extended families and churches become involved in the process of adoption. This will become the support team needed by this couple to raise their little deaf boy, who is currently waiting in Russia for them to come pick him up and bring him home. Pray that *Signs for Hope* can develop a grant and/or a partnership with another organization that will help to provide some much needed funds to help defray the costs for deaf/HOH adoptions.

The last aspect of *Support* is providing interpreter services for pre-adoptive parental training conferences, home studies, interviews, etc. While I enjoy facilitating the communication for these various meetings, without charging any fees, this is an area that I am still trying to develop, especially for those families that live greater distances from me. Most adoption agencies are not considered "public" so the accommodations of ADA do not necessarily apply to them; providing equal access for Deaf parents through sign language interpreters. I have heard numerous stories of Deaf couples having to pay for all the interpreter fees out of their own pockets. Other times the agency does provide an interpreter, however their skill is limited and they are hired simply because their fees are low. This is one area of this ministry that seems to be most needed and possibly the hardest to improve. Trying to negotiate a balance of some responsibility by the agency and making sure that the skilled interpreter is compensated appropriately is challenging. International adoptions add an additional cost concern and that is the need for an interpreter to accompany a Deaf couple overseas to facilitate communication there as they pick up their child(ren). Pray for those Deaf couples traveling abroad to bring their children home, as they may be required to provide travel and lodging expenses for a sign language interpreter, in addition to their own. Pray also, that *Signs for Hope* could develop a network of skilled interpreters—around the country—willing to provide their services for adoption related settings at a reduced rate and for God to provide funding to compensate them appropriately.

P.S. While writing this newsletter, I received an email from one of my *God-send's* mentioned earlier, introducing me to one of the founder's of a rather large Christian adoption agency here in the US. Apparently, he was sharing with this man over the weekend about *Signs for Hope* and the need for interpreters for home studies and travel. I had shared this concern with my *God-send* at an orphan conference two weeks ago. I

have no idea how this connection will proceed, but He does. Please pray for the Lord to lead—in this God-connection—in a way that pleases Him.

Advocacy is the third category where I spend much time. *Advocacy* covers Heart Adoptions (ongoing monthly sponsorship) of deaf/HOH children in countries where they may never be given the opportunity of adoption. As many of you know, *SfH* is currently working in Liberia with ACFI (African Christians Fellowship International); working diligently to provide sponsors for the 40+ deaf children living at the Deaf Mission. Approximately 25 deaf/HOH children still need sponsors. Liberia is especially on my heart today, as today is the scheduled run-off for the Liberia presidency. There is unrest in the country as the opposition party has called for a boycott of the run-off. Please continue to pray for our Liberian brothers and sisters and pray for God to lead more people to Heart Adopt these precious deaf/HOH children in Liberia whose needs are so great.

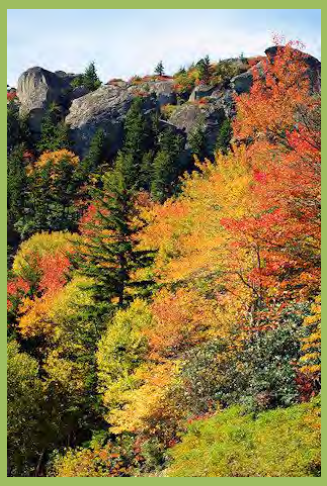
Advocacy also covers the *Signs for Hope* directive that all deaf/HOH children have the right to learn a manual language. While we recognize that there may be other communication options available for deaf/HOH children, and those who care for them, we believe the best option for these children is to be taught a signed language first. Language and communication are two different things. Communication can take on many forms, but the acquisition of a language—as soon as possible—is what enhances the lives of these children and gives them the best attainable outcome and the best opportunities for thriving. In other countries, *SfH* will honor indigenous sign languages when there are such and when there are not we will work with care-givers and teachers to teach them American Sign Language so they can, in turn, teach the deaf/HOH children they care for.

Advocacy closer home looks like starting a Deaf-friendly pre-school class at our church here in Asheville. We are seeking one additional teacher for this new class and as soon as that person is secured we will begin registering deaf/HOH children and others, as space allows. The purpose in starting a class like this is two-fold. One is to increase awareness of the Deaf community area-wide; and two is to allow hearing parents the option of exposing their deaf/HOH children to the Deaf world and it's language of ASL at a very early age. Please pray for God to send us the second teacher for this class, soon.

The Share His Hope Orphan & Foster Care Conferences are also a large part of *Advocacy.* While I am convinced this is a much needed conference for our region things have not *fallen into place* when trying to secure a firm date and general session speakers for the next Share His Hope conference. Recently, someone volunteered to take over much of the responsibility for planning the 2012 conference, but everything is not finalized for this baton-passing, yet. In passing the baton to someone else for organizing this conference, know full well, the Deaf-friendly aspect will remain intact. I covet your prayers for being able to get things confirmed and on the calendar for the next Share His Hope orphan care conference, ASAP, so that specific plans can begin being solidified.

I think that covers most major aspects of what I do as *Signs for Hope;* however there are other things I do as Becky Lloyd. They include two very part-time jobs for pay; one is interpreting in the community and the other is working in the dining room at The Cove. These might take up 5-10 hours per week, max. On a weekly basis, I also provide interpreting services for Asheville Deaf Church and Bible Study Fellowship, as well as, other Christian conferences throughout the year. I still pray weekly for our children with a local Mom's In Touch group, even though our children are grown and on their own. I have several mentor/accountability

relationships with women in the community and I try to attend a bi-weekly women's Bible study regularly. And…I am Charles Lloyd's wife.



There is no doubt that it is by your prayers that God grants me the ability to do all that I do. I do not require much sleep at night and I can accomplish many things even before the sun comes up in the mornings. My life does require much flexibility and it is not uncommon for *my perfectly planned day* to be completely changed—thankfully interrupted—by one email or phone call. I am so thankful for those of you who pray for me and *Signs for Hope,* as it is obvious that you are just as much a part of this ministry as I am. I urge you to continue your prayers, whatever they might look like.

In closing allow me to share the three connections God gave me while at an orphan care conference in SC week before last.

Charles and I arrived early and found a table. We left our things and went back out to get coffee and mingle. When we came back in three ladies were seated at our table. They were completing their introductions and explanations of why there were there and one turned to ask us the same. When I told them God had called me "to coordinate the adoption of deaf orphans in the world", one of the ladies quickly shared that she had taken American Sign Language in college for her foreign language credit. She later came to me during the first breakout session to say that she knew our meeting was not an accident and that she and her husband were in the adoption process and were open to adopting a deaf/HOH child since one of their biological daughters was HOH and they already knew sign language.

When I asked one of the other ladies why she was there, she responded by signing to me that both her parents were deaf. Later in the day we had an extended conversation and I suspect I will hear from her soon.

The third connect came at lunch when a woman sat at our table who was a home study case worker from Raleigh, NC. When I told her what I do, she looked at me and said, "That is very interesting, especially since I received a phone call from a woman, just yesterday, looking to adopt a deaf child." My husband gave her my business card and the next day I was contacted by the woman she spoke of. I have been diligently trying to encourage this family and help them locate that deaf child God has for them, since that connection. Mom and Dad are ASL interpreters and they sign with their three biological hearing children. And Dad is in the process of getting an additional degree in Deaf Education.

God's repeated confirmation of His clear calling reminds me to remind you; Liberian deaf/HOH children need sponsors, the Vocational Trade School at the Deaf Mission needs to be completed, deaf/HOH children are waiting to be adopted, parents need help raising funds to adopt their deaf/HOH children, and God through James tells us what pure religion is supposed to look like…

> Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.
> James 1:27

Only by His mercy and His grace,

Becky

Contact and donations: www.SignsforHope.org; 828-691-2581; PO Box 460, Fairview, NC 28730