SIGNS FOR HOPE

SFH PrayerLetter October 2013

I asked Vandora Henderson, longtime friend, traveling companion, and Signs for Hope board member to share with us, this month. She has traveled to Liberia with me 5 times, joined me at orphan care and adoption conferences & trainings, and in the homes of those who have adopted deaf children. Please join us in praying for God to open the door for her to join with us again as SFH travels to Liberia in February/March 2014

VANDORA HENDERSON

On February 11, 2013, Signs for Hope returned to Liberia, West Africa, this being our 4th trip, and as usual it was filled with Only God moments. I want to share with you a few of those moments, but especially how God worked in my being able to go for three weeks during the school year.

The previous trips, like the one in February, occurred during the USA school year, however the other trips were at the end of the school year when we are wrapping things up before summer break and enjoying the last few days with the children. The timing of this trip was during a time when things were really changing at my school. We were implementing new programs and revising and editing others. This made it very challenging to write out lesson plans for my substitute. Although I had to ask permission from my superintendent on all the other trips, too, this one was different in that it was for a longer period of time(17-days). I hesitated about this and then decided that I just needed to do it. Once I got that permission, it was on with lesson planning. It was only through His power that I was able to teach and get lesson plans for three weeks completed. After I found out that my Deaf pastor and his wife were going to Liberia I knew then that I had to go. I actually think that gave me a little more motivation and energy to get things done. I wanted to see the interactions between the deaf students and teachers at the Deaf Home, in Liberia, and my Deaf pastor and his wife. I thank God for allowing me to go during this time of the school year.

Those 25 years of teaching experience show up in Liberia!

It was so amazing to see how the students and teachers interacted with our Deaf team members. Being a teacher, I know how important that relationship is, and for the line of communication to be open and as unhindered as possible. Seeing the children's eyes light up as they communicated freely in small group and large group interactions was priceless. No one could have explained this to me; I had to see it for myself. How delightful that was! I remember the year when "Rachel" first came to the Deaf school having very little

but, the next year we saw the light in her eyes as she was communicating with other students and our team members. That same light was evident when the students began signing with our Deaf team members.

It was also amazing to see how God knit not only our team together, but our team with the other teams that were serving at the same time we were there. It was so awesome to see the Body of Christ doing actually what it is meant to do -- work together. Each person was vitally needed because of his or her experiences and/or expertise. We were assured that Only God could plan (before the foundation of the world) for all of us to meet together at that appointed time.

Sometimes God wants our availability more than our ability. This trip allowed me to see that I depend too much on my ability and not enough on my availability to God, "For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose"(Philippians 2:13). So, as you are reading this, don't believe the lie from our Enemy you have nothing to offer. Even as I am writing this, I have to remember that He wants to use me and the experiences that He has allowed me to experience, for His glory. There are many times I am tempted to say —and yes sometimes I do give in to the temptation—"Well, that person could do a better job than me". However, that person has not had the experiences that I have had. God wants me to stop trying to get it just right, stop thinking about myself and remember that I am a member of the Body of Christ.

There was not a situation or circumstance that occurred before (lesson planning), during (vehicles breaking down) or after (finding out that during my stay a flea had traveled back with me and therefore I had to have a biopsy on my toe) that trip, back in February, that would make me want to rethink or regret going. I say, with assurance, "Yes, I will continue to go as God leads."

As preparations are being made for this next trip (February 28 – March 10, 2014), I can see that it is not going to be a trip but another adventure.

Steve Farmer, on staff at the Tennessee School for the Deaf (Knoxville), and others will be joining Signs for Hope as we travel to Liberia in 2014. Among other things, we will be visiting the Deaf schools and afterwards discussing our observations. I can only imagine where those discussions will lead. As usual, there are circumstances and situations that can only cause me to say "From the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither has the eye seen, any God besides You, who acts for the one who waits for Him." Isaiah 64:4

Will you consider joining us - physically, financially, and/or most importantly prayerfully? It's an adventure that cannot be explained only experienced.

Vandora Henderson

Signs for Hope Updates!

DEAF ADOPTIONS

FOUR NEW FAMILIES HAVE CONTACTED SFH VIA THE WEBSITE OVER THE PAST COUPLE OF WEEKS. THESE FAMILIES ARE SEEKING MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ADOPTING DEAF CHILDREN AND CONTINUING TO PRAY AND SEEK GOD' S GUIDANCE.

WE WILL BE UPLOADING SOME EXTENSIVE RESOURCES, THANKS TO LIZA BUSH, SPECIFICALLY RELATED TO RAISING DEAF CHILDREN, TO THE SFH WEBSITE, SOON. THESE ARE RESOURCES THAT HAVE BEEN SHARED IN THE SFH DEAF ADOPT FAMILIES FACEBOOK GROUP OVER THE PAST YEAR.

I HAVE LOST COUNT, SOMETIME DURING THIS YEAR, OF THE EXACT NUMBER OF FAMILIES WHO HAVE NOW CONNECTED WITH SFH, BUT I KNOW THERE ARE MORE THAN 65.

THE NUMBER OF FAMILIES WHO HAD CONTACTED SFH BY THE END OF 2012 WAS 36, WHICH MEANS WE HAVE ALMOST DOUBLED THE FAMILIES WE ARE WALKING ALONG SIDE IN THIS LIFE-LONG JOURNEY CALLED ADOPTION, THIS YEAR. TO GIVE YOU A BETTER IDEA OF HOW QUICKLY THESE NUMBERS ARE GROWING, AT THE END OF JULY 2011, THERE WERE ONLY TWO FAMILIES THAT HAD CONNECTED WITH SFH. PLEASE PRAY FOR GOD TO SEND CO-LABORERS TO HELP US CONTINUE TO PROVIDE FOR THE NEEDS OF THESE FAMILIES AS THEY OBEY GOD'S CALL TO ADOPT DEAF CHILDREN, WHO ARE SO CLOSE TO OUR FATHER'S HEART.

THERE ARE THREE SFH FAMILIES WHO HAVE BROUGHT THEIR DEAF DAUGHTERS HOME IN THE PAST 5 WEEKS, THE ELY FAMILY (PHILIPPINES), THE BARSCH FAMILY (PHILIPPINES), AND THE JOHNSON FAMILY (CHINA). PLEASE CONTINUE TO PRAY FOR THESE FAMILIES AS THEY CONTINUE TRANSITIONING AND BONDING AND DISCOVER HOW TO BEST HELP THEIR ADOPTED DEAF CHILDREN HEAL FROM THEIR ABUSIVE AND NEGLECTED PASTS.

THE WORRELL FAMILY AND THE FINK FAMILY HAVE MOVED TO AUSTIN, TX AND HAVE NOT BEEN DISAPPOINTED BY THEIR FIVE DEAF CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES AT THE TEXAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF. THEY ARE STILL TRANSITIONING TO NEW HOMES, NEW FRIENDS, AND NEW CHURCHES, AND THE VASTLY DIFFERENT CULTURE OF TEXAS, SO PLEASE CONTINUE TO PRAY FOR THEM AS WELL.

FOUR FAMILIES ARE INCHING CLOSER TO FINALIZING THEIR ADOPTIONS AND AT LEAST TWO, THE COLLICOTTS, AND THE LOOS, WILL PROBABLY TRAVEL WITHIN THE NEXT 2 - 4 MONTHS TO BRING THEIR DEAF CHILDREN HOME FROM BULGARIA AND CHINA. ANOTHER FAMILY IS WAITING PATIENTLY TO SEE IF GOD WILL OPEN THE DOOR FOR THEM TO ADOPT A DEAF CHILD DOMESTICALLY. PLEASE PRAY SPECIFICALLY FOR THIS CHILD AS HE FACES THE POSSIBILITY OF A 2ND ADOPTION, THE FIRST WAS INTERNATIONAL, AND HE STILL HAS LITTLE TO NO LANGUAGE. YES, RIGHT HERE IN AMERICA!

IT IS AWESOME TO SEE GOD ALREADY TOUCHING THE HEARTS OF SOME OF THESE ADOPTED DEAF CHILDREN AND I AM DELIGHTED TO SHARE THERE ARE AT LEAST 4 OF THEM WHO HAVE DECIDED TO FOLLOW CHRIST OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS. PLEASE PRAY FOR GOD TO CONTINUE TO GUIDE FAMILIES AS THEY DISCIPLE THEIR DEAF CHILDREN TO FOLLOW GOD WHOLEHEARTEDLY.

The Ely Family

The Barsch Family

The Johnson Family

LIBERIA

LIBERIA IS A COUNTRY AND A PEOPLE THAT HAS A WAY OF GETTING UNDER YOUR SKIN AND DEEP INTO YOUR HEART. WHEN GOD ORCHESTRATES MY CONNECTING WITH OTHERS, WHO HAVE THE SAME HEART FOR LIBERIA, IT IS FASCINATING TO HEAR THE SIMILARITIES IN THEIR STORIES AS THEY RELATE HOW CHALLENGING IT IS TO ESTABLISH SUSTAINABLE RELATIONSHIPS WHICH BRING WITH IT STRONG COMMUNICATION, WITH OUR LIBERIAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

ANYTIME TWO CULTURES COLLIDE THE CHALLENGE FOR BUILDING STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS INCREASES. RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN OUR OWN CULTURE AND THEN OUR CHRISTIAN SUB-CULTURE ARE NOT EASY, SO WHY WOULD WE THINK THEY WOULD BE EASY IN FOREIGN LANDS? IN ADDITION, IN ANY RELATIONSHIP WHERE ONE IS TRYING TO "HELP" ANOTHER THE POSSIBILITY FOR HURT FEELINGS AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS IS GREATLY MULTIPLIED, AS THIS IS AN EVEN MORE SENSITIVE AREA TO FORGE STRONG LASTING RELATIONSHIPS, BUILT ON MUTUAL TRUST & RESPECT. AND THAT IS ONLY MAGNIFIED, ESPECIALLY, WHEN THOSE IN THE PAST WHO TRIED TO "HELP" ONLY MADE THINGS WORSE. IT IS ONLY WHEN THE ONE WHO IS TRYING TO "HELP" THE OTHER, REALIZES IT IS SIMPLY BY GOD'S GRACE THEIR ROLES ARE NOT REVERSED AND IN GOD'S EYES REALIZE BOTH ARE COMPLETELY EQUAL. MY SIN AND CIRCUMSTANCES ARE NO WORSE THAN YOUR SIN AND CIRCUMSTANCES BECAUSE OUR SINS ARE ALL FORGIVEN BY GOD AND HE IS THE ONE WHO HAS ALLOWED ALL OUR CIRCUMSTANCES, INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY, TO BRING ABOUT HIS GOOD FOR EACH OF US.

PLEASE PRAY FOR BRO. ED KOFI AS HE RETURNS TO LIBERIA NOVEMBER 4TH. HE HAS GREAT OPPORTUNITIES BEFORE HIM, WHICH WILL REQUIRE MUCH PRAYER FOR WISDOM AND DISCERNMENT. THE SEARCH FOR A DIRECTOR FOR THE DEAF MISSION IS A PRIORITY. ASK GOD TO PROVIDE IN A WAY THAT ONLY HE WILL RECEIVE THE GLORY.

PRAY ALSO FOR SFH AS WE ASK GOD TO PUT TOGETHER THIS NEXT TEAM FOR OUR UPCOMING TRIP FEBRUARY 28 - MARCH 10, 2014. SFH BOARD MEMBER, STEVE FARMER, AS VANDORA SHARED, WILL BE LEADING THIS TEAM AND OUR PLANS ARE TO EVALUATE THE VAST EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF THE DEAF CHILDREN AND LEARN HOW TO WALK ALONGSIDE THOSE WHO FAITHFULLY CARE FOR AND TEACH THEM. PRAY WE, TOO, CAN HAVE WISDOM AND DISCERNMENT AS TEACHING DEAF CHILDREN IN LIBERIA AND TEACHING DEAF CHILDREN IN AMERICA WILL BE VASTLY DIFFERENT.

MORE THAN 30 DEAF CHILDREN ARE STILL IN NEED OF HEART ADOPTION (MONTHLY SPONSORSHIP). YOUR MONETARY SPONSORSHIP, $40 EACH MONTH, GOES TO PROVIDE ALL THE DEAF CHILDREN WITH AT LEAST 2 MEALS PER DAY, BASIC MEDICAL SUPPLIES, AND SOME TEACHER STIPENDS. BUT THE ONE-ON-ONE RELATIONSHIP YOU DEVELOP WITH YOUR HEART ADOPTED DEAF SON OR DAUGHTER, AS YOU PRAY FOR THEM DAILY, WILL BE LIFE-CHANGING FOR YOU AND THEM. EMAIL ME FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HEART ADOPTION. SFH IS ALSO CONTINUING TO RAISE FUNDS, WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS, FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CONCRETE-BLOCK FENCE SURROUNDING THE PERIMETER OF THE DEAF MISSION COMPOUND. THE ESTIMATE FOR COMPLETION IS $45,000. TRADE SCHOOL ENDEAVORS, AGRICULTURE ENDEAVORS, AND THE SAFETY OF THE DEAF CHILDREN ARE ALL DELAYED UNTIL THIS FENCE CAN BE BUILT. WILL YOU PRAY FOR THIS TO BECOME AN ANSWERED PRAYER AND ASK GOD IF YOU ARE TO BE A PART OF THAT ANSWER AND HOW?

Signs for Hope Christmas Fundraiser!

SFH is launching our 1st Annual Christmas Fundraiser!
We are calling it "MATTHEW 25:40"!

Here is the story Jesus shares in Matthew chapter 25:
34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' 37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?
38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' 40 "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

WIN A TRIP FOR TWO TO HAWAII!!!

You could win a trip-for-2
to Hawaii!
This includes airfare for 2!
5-nights in a 5-star hotel!
And an island helicopter tour!
(Retail value is $6,000).
Or you can choose the
$5,000 cash prize.

Only 2,000 tickets will be sold, so the odds of winning are great!

Ticket Cost: $20 each

Purchase tickets from me (828-691-2581) text or voice, on the SFH blog, on the SFH website, or via mail. Make sure your name, address, phone, and email are entered wherever you purchase tickets. A random electronic drawing will be held at 6PM(EDT) on December 23, 2013, making it possible for this to be an amazing Christmas gift for someone you love!

Please share this opportunity with others to be one of those who "did it for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine"!

From my heart to yours ...

As we approach the time of year where we reflect on all the many blessings we should be thankful for, everyday, the blessing that continues to overwhelm me, above many of the others, is the… indwelling Christ. Even the concept, Christ living in us, immediately conjures up thoughts of the miraculous mingled with thoughts of astonishment. How can this be? Our finite minds simply cannot comprehend the infinite. Why would God the Son be willing to take up residence in these weak and dying vessels…again? He had done so when He obeyed His Father and was born of Mary… God in flesh. Now, He is doing this in each one of us as we are obeying the will of our Father, as He did before us. Let me remind us of some of the promises God's Word gives in relation to the Son dwelling within believers.

John 14:19-21, 23
Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." …Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."

2 Corinthians 13:5
Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?

Galatians 2:20
I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Ephesians 3:16-21
I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Mystery of all mysteries…Christ in you, the Hope of Glory!
Colossians 1:27

And I am thankful for each of you!

Becky

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In You, the fatherless find compassion.
- Hosea 14:3