SIGNS FOR HOPE

2014 is long gone! 2015 is moving right along!

Well, I have been "writing" this SFH PrayerLetter for weeks and I am just now sending it. It has taken many twists and turns, with many revisions, during these many weeks, but here is the final draft.

The first two months of 2015 have been full to overflowing, in so many ways. Here are some verses God's Spirit has been bringing to mind these last two months in light of personal experiences and current events around this world.

"You will keep the mind that is dependent on You in perfect peace, for it is trusting in You."
~Isaiah 26:3

"Surely the righteous will never be shaken; they will be remembered forever. They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the LORD."
~Psalm 112:6-7

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.".
~Matthew 11:28-30

"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."
~2 Corinthians 4:18

So much change and growth has taken place within Signs for Hope over the past year. ONLY GOD... could have conceived and brought these things to fruition. New board members, much training for me, multiple expressed needs by those God has called us to walk this journey called life with hand-in-hand. Now, He is opening doors for us to begin to meet those needs in nothing less than miraculous ways. Will this be an easy road? No! However, our God has promised to walk with us each step of the way. Jesus tells us, clearly our only requirement ... "Obey my Father's will." Amazing God-connections, which always cause me to stop and catch my breath. God's Spirit touching hearts to support us continuously prayerfully and also financially as we do what we do, only in His strength. These are some of the things that give me the willingness to persevere when there is so much hurting all around. It is truly mind-boggling as I look back at all He has done, over the past year, 2014. If you are curious about all God has been doing, check out the archived newsletters on the Signs for Hope website and the Signs4Hope blog. This verse resonates within me and grips me to continue to follow His lead ...

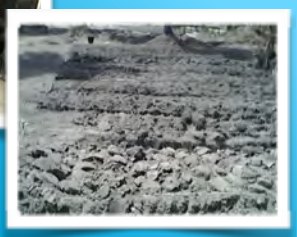
"The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it." ~ 1 Thessalonians 5:24

Now, for the present, allow me to share with you a portion of what I shared with our SFH board members at our quarterly meeting last Saturday. These are some of the things 'God is up to' in and through SFH and as always your prayers are a vital part of His plan.

Liberia

Schools started back in Liberia last week on Monday. ACFI is winding down their Ebola emergency support for the Daniel Hoover Children's Village and the Deaf Mission (Oscar & Viola Stewart School for the Deaf). The last container carrying various supplies will be delivered soon. The construction on the wall at the Deaf Mission continues. Tentative plans for my return to Liberia are for May remain, with the desire of seeing the deaf children before the end of the school year in early June. This trip would be a re-defining trip to determine the many changes that have taken place due to Ebola. If the results of this trip are conducive we will plan to take a team back in the fall, with the focus being teacher training for the deaf schools.

The agriculture program continues at the Deaf Mission (ACFI Deaf school) and two new agriculture projects have begun with Zayzay's leadership (Liberia Self-Reliance Initiative) within the past two weeks; one at the VA School for the Deaf (VASD) and one in Johnsonville at the Bethlehem compound where numerous Deaf young adults live and worship. These two new agriculture projects have not needed any funding by SFH, just prayer and networking. This, brothers and sisters, is what "partnership" is all about! ONLY GOD!



Left: VASD Teachers & Students preparing the soil for planting. Right: Deaf Mission planting for spring.

Vietnam

Our partner organization, Orphan Voice, opened New Beginnings School for the Deaf in late November 2014. Tony Brewer, director, began to search the web for resources when their ministry discovered multiple deaf children still living with their families in rural Vietnam in late 2013. God led him to the Signs for Hope website. By the way, when was the last time you thanked God for the technology He uses to spread the gospel all around the world? Tony's team had been ministering to those with many disabilities through the years, but had never been faced with deafness. Tony and I quickly set up a Skype meeting and I shared my heart's desire with him, to allow these children to remain with their families, where God had placed them and to provide training for them there locally, and that's what they did. Last spring, one of their own staff who willing to begin to learn Vietnamese Sign Language (VSL). SFH joined with Orphan Voice to help provide the funds for this great need. She attended classes in the morning and hung out with the Deaf at a local all Deaf-run restaurant in the afternoons. There are currently 7 deaf students (4 boys and 3 girls) attending New Beginnings. Four of these students are 9 yr. olds, one 10 yr. old, one 13 yr. old and one 17 yr. old. Yes, you read that right, one 17 yr. old boy learning sign language for the first time in his life. Two others were too disruptive and were asked not to return, for now. None of these children had attended school or knew any sign language before this school opened. You and I cannot begin to imagine how hard it is to keep these students focused. Please pray for this precious godly teacher, Mai, as she tries to teach these deaf children in the midst of some very challenging circumstances. The goal is for them to learn to communicate via sign language so they can know Jesus loves them and He has an amazing plan for their lives.

Pray also for this newly trained teacher, Mai (Ho Thi Thyet Mai) as she will soon begin to teach VSL to the children's hearing families, as well. SFH is currently sending $200 monthly to help support this ongoing work in Vietnam. Please join me in praying for God to provide at least two churches or other organizations to partner with us in this much-needed endeavor. Estimated annual costs are below:

Annual rent: $1300
School lunches: $1667
Repair/renovation of facility: $350
Utilities: $300
Transportation: $225
School supplies: $300
Teacher's salary: $3,500

Also, Tony and the Lord have been tugging at my heart to go to Vietnam to see for myself what He is doing through New Beginnings School for the Deaf. Tony believes a team focused on the deaf children would be a great support to them and also to Mai (their teacher) and their families.

So, we are excited to announce we are planning a SFH 2015 Vietnam Trip! The dates are tentatively, June 12 – 21. The airfare from either Charlotte or Atlanta to Da Nang is approximately $2,200, currently. In-country costs will be no more than $25 each day. Will you pray for God to touch the hearts of those He desires to join this SFH team to Vietnam? Contact me for more info.

Da Nang, Vietnam

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" ... Isaiah 6:8

Signs for Hope Historical Moment

Signs for Hope has just submitted our first matching grant proposal for $10,000 ($20,000 total). Even If we are not approved we will still be moving forward with the development of an "early intervention" type program, focused on American Sign Language as the primary mode of communication for adoptive families. So far, we have not been able to identify something like this already available. Many SFH families have shared their immediate need for this kind of training, as they have little to no knowledge of raising deaf children and their unique needs and many are just learning ASL, along with their deaf children. Two recommended curriculums, SKI HI & Fairview Learning, will be utilized, along with Deaf mentors and other resources. Improving ASL skills for parents and children will then give them a greater ability to bond and also improve their deaf children's English reading and comprehension skills as they progress through their education. Trainings will take place via Webinars and virtual classrooms. There will be multiple trainers involved. The 1st Annual SFH ASL Immersion Family Camp, planned for this fall in NC, will be a place for these families and others to come together, face-to-face, for the experience of true immersion in ASL, the opportunity to hang out with many Deaf folks and learn first hand, the Deaf culture. Thank God for Liza Bush and the JOY she had as she was involved in filling out this grant application. Pray, also, for God to open this door if this is a way to bring Him the greatest glory.

SFH events I am aware of for the next few months are:

Please be praying for each and for any others God desires to put on my agenda.

February 24th – TBRI Post-training course ended; pray for the development plan of TBRI implementation for SFH families and others to continue.

March - 19th – 22nd – Virginia Baptist Conference of the Deaf, Alexandria, VA; planning to visit Gallaudet University for the first time.

April - 7th - 13th - San Antonio Trip - Observing at schools for the Deaf, meeting SFH families, Empowered to Connect conference (10th & 11th). Charles is joining me!

I expect to travel to Bulgaria sometime during April with the Collicott family for their 1st trip required for their adoption of Christopher. Christopher needs your prayers. He has many serious physical needs, much greater than deafness. He is 4 and weighs only 10 #'s.

April 29th – May 2nd – CAFO, Nashville (Christian Alliance for Orphans Annual Summit)

Lord willing, sometime in May, a small SFH team will travel to Liberia to scope out the many changes due to Ebola. Schools are in the process of reopening. Please be praying for this time of transition for our Liberian brothers and sisters.

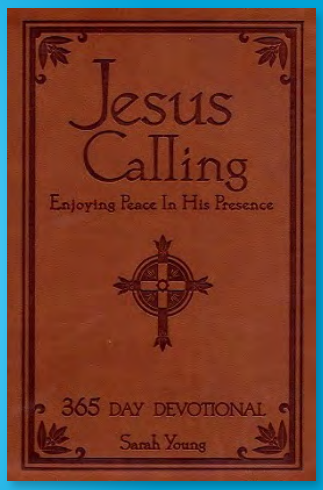
June 11th – 21st – Tentative Vietnam trip to see first-hand the New Beginnings School for the Deaf opened late in 2014 by Orphan Voice. SFH is in partnership with Orphan Voice for this new adventure. If you are interested in joining SFH in Vietnam please email me, asap, beckyblloyd@gmail.com.

June 24th – 29th – American Society for Deaf Children Annual Conference (ASDC) at the Indiana School for the Deaf, with various additional meetings with SFH families and with the Educating our Deaf Children homeschool group endeavoring to educate their deaf children at home.

Pray about Everything!
Philippians 4:6b

From My Heart To Yours …

I have been sharing Jesus Calling with those who follow us on Facebook, this year. In case you are unaware, Sarah Young, the author, lives with much pain and has for many years. Sarah battles Lyme disease, mis-diagnosed for 7 years as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. For many years, now, it is those brothers and sisters, who live with 24/7 pain and those who have lost much are the ones to whom I believe I can learn the most. IF their faith is shining brightly in the midst of their pain and suffering, they have been forced—granted the opportunity—to meet their LORD on a much deeper level than many of us ever take the opportunity to forge, aside from experiencing the same kind of pain and suffering. As, I put the finishing touches on this SFH PrayerLetter allow me to share JESUS CALLING – February 26, with each of you.



I AM LEADING YOU, STEP BY STEP, through your life. Hold My hand in trusting dependence, letting Me guide you through this day. Your future looks uncertain and feels flimsy—even precarious. That is how it should be. *Secret things belong to the Lord*, and future things are secret things. When you try to figure out the future, you are grasping at things that are Mine. This, like all forms of worry, is an act of rebellion: doubting My promises to care for you.

Whenever you find yourself worrying about the future, repent and return to Me. I will show you the next step forward, and the one after that, and the one after that. Relax and enjoy the journey in My Presence, trusting Me to open up the way before you as you go.

The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.
Deuteronomy 29:29

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.
Psalm 32:8

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