

Dear Friends,

Since returning to the U.S we CAN:

- *Drive wherever and whenever we want.*
- *Enjoy oil and sweat-free faces.*
- *View our beautiful pothole-free neighborhood.*
- *Eat salad and plenty of fresh vegetables.*
- *Use a washing machine.*

But we CANNOT:

- *Step out the front door to hordes of friendly children.*
- *Draw water from a well.*
- *Flush the toilet with a bucket of water.*
- *Hear Christians sing loudly and spontaneously on the streets.*
- *Be sick in bed with malaria.*



We are very happy to be back to the best country on earth, but honestly are experiencing some reverse culture-shock. After being in Liberia for one month, it is hard to reconcile these two very different realities. We feel that part of ourselves was left in Liberia.

The team consisted of our family, sparked by a desire to return to the country of our children's origin to bless Liberia in some way. Shauna Jehle joined the team originally as the team interpreter. However, her talents, vision and willingness to serve made her invaluable as she taught the children, photographed, took our places when we were sick, tirelessly interpreted, etc.

Our plane landed June 26 in Monrovia, the capital city of Liberia. Our host, whom we had never met, was an hour late. This had us a bit nervous, as numerous strangers offered to take our luggage and give us rides. We managed to ward them off until our host, Emmanuel Jones, arrived. He is the bishop of Voice of Pentecost Churches and has a passion for youth—caring for the needy, leading them to Christ through sports and providing home-like environments for them. We were impressed by his strong stand for integrity and purity in the midst of a corrupt culture. His wife, Ramona, is an excellent Proverbs 31 woman of God.

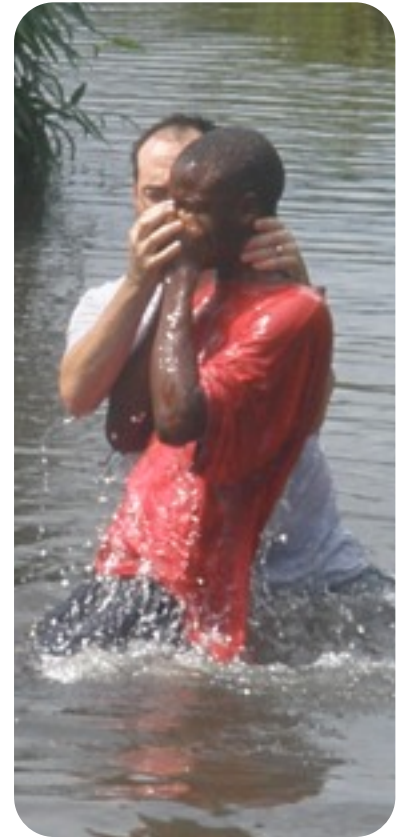
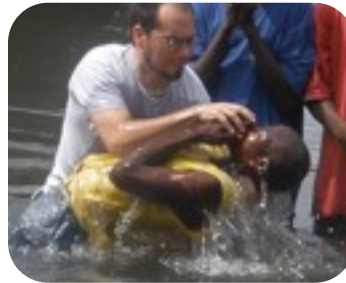


Emmanuel Jones and his wife, Ramona.



The first half of our trip, we focused on deaf children. We planned 5 - d a y

Bible clubs at African Christians Fellowship International (ACFI) deaf home and Emmanuel's newly erected deaf home. ACFI had about 60 deaf children. We were encouraged to see improvements in their facility since our last visit during the adoption. The kids are signing much better, as they have consistent teaching from deaf adults. The Bible club was a great success. The children enjoyed themselves and memorized 5 Bible verses, and 7 older boys committed their lives to Christ, demonstrated by a joyful baptism in a nearby creek.



At Emmanuel's deaf home we were greeted by 13 very small deaf children, who had no language. These children were brought from a far-off area, Nimba county. We quickly axed our plan for Bible club, and went to work teaching them sign language. Our first task was to give them sign names. It was beautiful to see them come to life,

as they became able to communicate with us. A hearing man, named Edison, is director for the deaf children and has a passion for preparing the deaf for adult life. However, he uses Signed Exact English (SEE) with the children, and is not very effective in communicating. We tried to explain the advantage of a visual language over a script based language, but do not know how much he was able to receive.

For the second half of the trip we focused on existing deaf organizations. As for church ministries, there are four churches with deaf ministries. None of them is led by the deaf. They have interpreted services and Bible study taught by the hearing interpreters. Again, SEE was used. At Sunday School, Joseph asked if someone could tell him what the message was about. No one raised their hand. When questioning the deaf later, it turns out that they do not understand the interpreted message, except "once in a while if the interpreter is really good, we can understand part of it." They are in desperate need of Bible stories, which can be readily understood and taught by the deaf.



Interpreter at Church of Christ.



Joseph teaching principles of ASL.



Joseph teaching Evangelism Class.

There are three main deaf organizations in Liberia—Liberian National Association for the Deaf (LNAD), Organization for the Social Integration of Liberian Deaf (OSILD), and Liberian Deaf Women in Action (LDWA). They seemed to have very similar goals—education and equipping deaf with marketable skills. However, they did not seem to work together or like each other very much. They all asked for American Sign Language books. They were surprised to learn that each country has their own sign language and do not all use ASL. We challenged them to develop their own Liberian Sign Language book and sell it. OSILD seemed the most enthusiastic about this prospect.



Liberian National Association for the Deaf

We visited several deaf schools. There are about six in Monrovia, all privately run. Some of them seem well equipped and clean, like Virginia School for the Deaf and Hope School for the Deaf. They had several sewing machines for vocational training, educational posters and mosquito netting. OSILD's school emphasized sustainable farming, offering agriculture and husbandry emphases. Other schools



Deaf Children at Virginia School for the Deaf.

We held two workshops. One was on American Sign Language, teaching the principles of ASL, but encouraging them to use their native Liberian signs (not SEE). The other workshop was on evangelism. Our goal was for the deaf to use these tools to evangelize their own people, many of whom do not have language or knowledge of the gospel. It was encouraging to see the deaf Liberians share their testimonies. We planned another workshop for those involved with deaf education, but Joseph and then Nicole fell ill with malaria. We plan to send the messages via email to the teachers and hope it will give encouragement and vision, as they raise up this next generation of Liberian deaf.

were ill-equipped, unclean and the children malnourished. All the schools face issues with consistent funding for teachers. In fact, most of them are volunteers. Furthermore, the teaching methods (in SEE, of course) can be damaging to children's development. For example, children are whipped until they can recite the alphabet correctly.

Prayer Requests:

- The Lord would send a couple to stay in Liberia 1-2 years. The woman could teach at Emmanuel's new deaf home, while training current Liberian teachers from other schools. The man could work with OSILD, helping to develop Liberian Sign Language and teaching Bible stories and vision for church leadership to the deaf.
- Deaf orphanages and schools would allocate resources appropriately and honestly so that the children are adequately fed and clothed.
- The Liberian deaf will understand the gospel in a visually significant way and be able to apply God's Word to their lives.
- The rebuilding of Liberia will include the deaf in the government's plan by providing equal access to services and education.
- Families of deaf children will learn sign language and parent their own children, instead of sending them off to orphanages/ schools.
- Deaf will learn skills so they can support themselves instead of begging.



- Deaf-led churches and deaf ministries would be raised up.
- Discipleship and growth of the seven saved at ACFI.



Thank you for supporting us and making this trip possible.



*Love in Christ,
Joseph, Nicole, J.P. and Hadassah*

