

THE WIDENER FAMILY GHANA, AFRICA

November/December 2004 Report

Dear Friends,

One year ago I made my survey trip to Ghana with Bro. Larry Morgan. It was there that God burdened my heart for the Ghanaian people. One day as we were taking care of some business in Takoradi, we drove past a government school for the deaf. At the time I did not give much thought to this matter of reaching the deaf with the Gospel of Christ. However, the Lord did not let me forget about it. Since that day the Lord has purposely placed deaf people, missionaries to the deaf, and opportunities to learn sign language in my pathway.

Though the population of the deaf in Ghana is unknown, I have recently learned that there are nine government run deaf schools in Ghana. In one particular village there is known to be over 300 deaf people who were born deaf because of a gene deficiency. That village is one of the few places in the world with its own indigenous sign language understood only by the village. However, in the rest of Ghana, many children and adults alike have become deaf as a result of untreated tropical illnesses which cause high fever.

The deaf schools in Ghana teach Ghana Sign Language (GSL), though American and British Sign Language is intelligible. Because Ghana is an English-speaking country, it adds to our advantage of communicating with the deaf. My family has already started a video course in American Sign Language. Later we plan to attend a local church sponsored Deaf Ministry training seminar. Then on the field we will work at learning GSL.

Our main goals on the field will never change- evangelizing the lost, establishing independent Baptist churches, and training national leaders to carry on the work. But now the Lord has given us a new understanding of what it means to "preach the Gospel to every creature." We are not going to overlook the deaf, who cannot hear without a preacher in sign language. By God's grace, we plan to establish deaf ministries in the churches that we organize.

We are thankful to report that our support level is now up to 58% after eleven months of deputation. Thanks to these new supporting churches: Victory Baptist, Kingfisher, OK; Cornerstone Baptist, McAlester, OK; Northside Baptist, Killeen, TX; Landmark Baptist, Red Oak, TX; Fellowship Baptist, Spearman, TX; Victory Baptist, Terrell, TX; and Bible Baptist, Jacksonville, AR.

We pray that each of you will have many opportunities to share the wonderful news of our Saviour during this blessed holiday season!

For His Glory & Praise,

Johnny Widener

Johnny Widener

Received with thanks: _____