



STEPHEN & LAURA HOLT

...GATHER UP THE FRAGMENTS THAT REMAIN THAT NOTHING BE LOST. JOHN 6:12

JUNE - AUGUST 2009 PRAYER LETTER & MINISTRY REPORT

Dear Praying Family and Friends;

I am sitting amid boxes, packing materials, plastic storage bins, and assorted stacks with our little home is in general disarray as we prepare to relocate to the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. Our three years of study at The DeLand School of THE BIBLE and 16 months of deputation travels have culminated in this event and we are about to commence Chapter Three in our walk with the Lord. We have no words of gratitude to express our deep appreciation for all of you who have helped us to arrive at this point; this has truly been a team effort. I am reminded of 1 Samuel 7:12 which says "Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us." Hitherto suggests a look to the past as a reminder of where we came from as well anticipation for the future that the Lord has yet in store.

On Tuesday, November 3, we leave from Orlando, travel through Belgium, and arrive in Sierra Leone on November 4. This is a minor change from the plans stated in our last letter as that flight was canceled.

TRAVEL REPORT: On July 12, I arrived back in Florida from my four month visit to Liberia and Sierra Leone. During that time a great foundation was laid for us to hit the ground running upon our return together in November. Below is a very brief chronicle of some of the highlights from my trip.

In order to expand our area of ministry and give us more freedom of travel, I purchased a used Toyota Land Cruiser and I have gotten fairly good at driving as aggressively as the Sierra Leoneans. There are almost no traffic laws and the rules are arbitrarily applied at any given intersection. I personally like the rule of gross tonnage; if they're bigger than me, they've got the right away; if not then we'll fight it out.

Much of this report will focus on new areas of ministry. However, I do not want to neglect our immediate area of Allen Town where Adam Brockett and I evangelized, passed out hundreds of Gospel tracts, engaged in productive conversations with our Muslim neighbors and held Bible studies in our home. We also intermittently spent time with each of the three established churches on the peninsula in Freetown, Tombo, and Waterloo. In addition to preaching at each of these churches, we assisted them with evangelism in their local areas and have made plans to begin Bible training with them when Laura and I return. On June 26, I bid farewell to Adam as he left Sierra Leone to return to his home in Upstate NY. It was truly a privilege to serve with this dedicated brother.

NEW GROUND - THE SOUTHERN PROVINCE: The highlight of my trip is the time spent in the Southern Province, an area I had never visited before. It appears that the Lord is directing our attention to this area and we are giving it prayerful consideration regarding resettling there when our current lease in Allen Town expires in April 2010. I made a total of three excursions to Bo, Sierra Leone's second largest city and 150 miles from Allen Town. Working with men from Grace Baptist Church we visited several outlying villages to meet with tribal elders, evangelize, conduct Bible training, and assess the local climate toward church planting. One larger village which I am particularly optimistic about is Bawomahun, an easy 37 mile drive from Bo. Well, it's easy if you don't mind the 3-4 hours in four-wheel-drive that it takes to get there!

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This area is anticipated to grow as there is a gold mining operation in the exploratory stage with expectations of beginning the mining phase within two years. We were extended an invitation to evangelize, conduct Bible training, and assist with church planting in and around this vicinity.

From Bawomahun there is a cluster of several outlying villages where we were privileged to minister. By way of example, our trek to the village of Kaivoma took us through a stream and over very rugged terrain. I have had four wheel drive vehicles in the past but this is the first time I have actually *needed* it; in Sierra Leone 4x4 does not imply recreational. We arrived at the village and at first I was somewhat disappointed because I could see only a few houses and very few people. However, within 20 minutes we had a group of people gathered up from work in their gardens and fields and soon the church house was filled to capacity. Others carried benches and sat around the outside of the church to listen. What a humbling thrill as this is the rainy season and they sat for three hours in the rain just to hear “Thus saith the LORD.” We then traveled back to the main village of Bawomahun and made ready for the evening Bible study. This was our pattern for the five days I spent in the area, traveling to smaller villages during the day to evangelize and preach then conducting Bible study back in Bawomahun at night. The meetings were well attended and were followed by engaging question and answer sessions. I am anxious to return as early as we can.

Additionally, I was able to visit several orphanages in and around Bo, all of which have extended an invitation to teach Bible stories to the children. With nearly 50 percent of the population being under the age of 15, much of our work will be with children. We are desirous to train up the younger generation in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4) showing them who the Father to the fatherless is (Ps. 68:5).

ANSWERED PRAYERS: You may recall that as Laura and I visited your church, I typically had three prayer requests. First, that I would learn the Krio language quickly – that has yet to be answered so please don’t stop praying. Secondly, that I would make the right connections to establish the network so vital to establishing a work within this culture. A good foundation for this network has begun and I ask that you continue to pray for it to expand. Thirdly, I asked that you pray for the Lord to give me a “Timothy” – a young man with a heart for his own people and whom I could disciple and train for future leadership in the ministry. The Lord has graciously answered that prayer in the person of a 16 year old war orphan. His name – Timothy! The Lord had to make it obvious to me. Timothy’s mother died shortly after giving birth to him. At the age of four he lost his father to the ravages of the civil war. He was then cared for by his elderly grandmother who, as she neared her own death, was able to place him in an orphanage in Bo. Sadly this orphanage lost its British funding and was forced to close its doors to any new children and find alternatives for those in their care. At the age of 14, Timothy was among the few children who were just days away from being turned out to live on the streets of Freetown. Learning of Timothy’s plight, a dear brother from Grace Baptist Church kindly agreed to provide him with a place to sleep and one meal a day. During my visits to Bo, I became acquainted with Timothy and after spending time with him and seeing his genuine desire to learn the Bible, I realized that this young man was God’s answer to my prayer. Timothy is currently staying at our rented home in Allen Town to act as caretaker in our absence. He will be assisting us with many of the domestic necessities in exchange for school tuition. He is 16 but only has an elementary education. He is a bright and teachable young man and I look forward to seeing how the Lord will use him.

I must say that I wish I had started this little adventure sooner in life. I am praying that Chapter Three will be long and healthy. Here is a sobering thought, in our first term on the field, I will turn 60 and my lovely bride of 28 years will turn 50! But I sure am thankful that the Lord has allowed us to taste the thrill and excitement of serving in this new theater of operation. Now we just need a few more laborers before this whole thing is over for good. Stay in the battle, He is the only one worthy of your vapor. Please be sure to scroll down and view photos from my trip.

By His Grace;

Stephen and Laura Holt



Our 4x4 Toyota Land Cruiser - for those of you old enough - think Marlin Perkins Mobile.



Timothy Rashid



The folks of Grace Baptist Church in Bo.



Preaching in a remote bush church which was accessible only by foot.



Teaching in Bawomahun.



Meeting with tribal elders in Kaivoma. We were warmly welcomed and extended an invitation to return for Bible teaching and church planting.