

# GATHER THE FRAGMENTS BAPTIST MISSION

## Stephen & Laura Holt

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2009 PRAYER LETTER & MINISTRY REPORT

JOHN 6:12

...GATHER UP  
THE FRAGMENTS  
THAT REMAIN  
THAT NOTHING  
BE LOST

BASED IN

Sierra Leone,  
West Africa

AN INTERNATIONAL  
OUTREACH OF

The BIBLE  
Baptist Church  
872 Glenwood Road  
DeLand, FL 32720  
386-736-9274  
Pastor James Knox

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A MINISTRY  
OF HELPS IN  
WEST AFRICA

Dear Praying Family and Friends;

Thank you for your prayers regarding our travel. Our 30 hour journey to Sierra Leone was tiring but without incident. Traveling with the dogs actually helped. We received preferential treatment, were directed to the head of the line, and given great care and attention. In Orlando, our bags were not even closely weighed in an effort to expedite the check-in process (one bag was overweight and the rest not even put on the scale). From there we bid farewell to Goodness and Mercy as they were taken to the cargo hold. We did not see them again until 20 hours later in Brussels where we had to claim and check them with the connecting airline although our bags were checked straight through. We were able to walk the boys for about 20 minutes, much to their relief, then it was back into the cargo hold for them and the last leg of the flight, another 10 hours. They made the entire journey without soiling or wetting their crates. Once in Sierra Leone, we quickly claimed our bags, negotiated customs, and were on a transport to the water taxi which would take us across the bay to Freetown. The water taxi ride was an exhilarating end to a long two days of travel. The water taxi is basically a small open boat with a make-shift enclosure, two out-board motors, and no lights. Our only light for the 45 minute ride was the full moon which was quite beautiful over the dark, choppy bay.

Our first month in Sierra Leone has largely been consumed by administrative needs and appeasing the governmental machine. It took a full three weeks of daily travel into Freetown simply to clear our container. The paper work is endless as is the number of signatures required, waiting sometimes as long as two hours for a single signature. *Nothing* happens quickly here and many days I left home before light and returned well after dark. But praise the Lord, that process is complete. Unfortunately we did sustain some loss through theft during the customs inspection at the waterfront. Most of my tools, some Bibles, one of Laura's cameras, along with other miscellaneous items are among the missing.

**HANDFULS OF PURPOSE:** All this time spent in Freetown has been frustrating but the Lord has also blessed it. As I leave Allen Town to travel into Freetown, I regularly give rides to people who are headed in the same direction which allows me time to preach the gospel to a captive audience. As my riders depart, I usually give them a gospel tract or New Testament. Several days in a row, I gave rides to three teen-aged school girls who attentively listened and asked great questions. At the end of the week, they gave their tracts back to me and had signed their names indicating they had become gloriously born again. Their smiles said it all!

**II TIMOTHY 4:5 "DO THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST":** During this first month we have had the privilege of assisting several established churches. On the first Sunday of each month I am teaching Sunday school and preaching at a fledgling church in Lumley, just outside of Freetown. I am helping this church in that capacity until March.

On November 13-15, Laura and I made the 155 mile trip to Bo in the Southern Province. Pastor Prince Nallo of Grace Baptist Church had a baptism scheduled with two young men who had completed the baptism class. I Corinthians 1:17 says "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel..." That Sunday, I preached the gospel in the regular church service then Pastor Nallo conducted the baptism. I had been asked to do the baptisms but declined. My purpose for this is that I want to remain as invisible as possible and always point church members to their pastor. These churches need to move away from the colonial mentality and be indigenous or they will never be self-sustaining. My role will be to assist the churches through training, discipleship, evangelism, and helping the pastors perform their functions more effectively. Following the meeting, we spent time fellowshiping with the Pastor and church family before returning to Allen Town.

Friday, November 27, we drove back to Bo and stayed overnight at a guest house. On Saturday morning we drove 37 miles from Bo to Baomahun. This is a *rough* ride taking 4 hours and frequently employing our four-wheel-drive. You may recall from our August, 2009 prayer letter that I have visited this church several times. Our purpose for this trip was two-fold. Saturday night I conducted Bible study with the young church in this village. They were glad to see me again but actually, I was just “yesterday's news”. The women were *ecstatic* to meet Laura. On Sunday morning I conducted Sunday school and the church service, both were well attended. That night I held a training session for the men addressing issues concerning church order. While I was inside with the men, Laura attended a tongues meeting with the ladies outside. Speaking through an interpreter who was working in *THREE* languages (tongues), Laura addressed these dear ladies giving them much encouragement in the Lord. She expressed her desires to help them grow into the godly women He can enable them to be in spite of their difficult circumstances. This was enthusiastically received and Laura is really looking forward to conducting this women's study. Baomahun is also home to nearly 300 children which is another area of ministry that Laura will be taking on in the near future. While I have been attending to business in Freetown, much of her time has been devoted to preparation for these groups.

Our second purpose for visiting this remote village was to deliver a portion of the donated medical supplies which were shipped in our container. Baomahun has a small hospital/clinic with one medical officer and two nurses (all indigenous). They are terribly underfunded and seldom have enough supplies. We were glad to be able to assist them in their need. Following the morning church service, we met with the chief and village elders to make the official donation. Because I have been there before and now have returned with my wife, the chief and elders, seeing our commitment to their people, have invited us to make Baomahun our home. Our lease in Allen Town is up in April and we are currently seeking the Lord's guidance for a new housing arrangement; we are strongly considering moving to Baomahun. The exciting thing about being in Baomahun is that there is a British company opening a gold mine on the outskirts of the village. They have just moved past the prospecting phase and are going forward with the mine development project. The first phase of this development would be the improvement of the road! The mine would employ 500 people which would also necessitate many other people for support services within the village. This will turn the area into a soul-mine not only in Baomahun but also in the many smaller out-lying villages, several of which I have already visited.

**PRaise THE LORD FOR A THIEF!** That may sound like a strange statement but after I relay the story, you will understand. Not 500 yards from our home is a mosque which feels it is necessary to broadcast their activities via a mega-watt amplification system. This means a call to prayer and worship service every day at 5:15 am and again at 6:00 pm. Friday's worship service extends through much of the day and is even louder. Then, one morning – silence; it was rather startling at first. We learned through rumor-control-central that somebody had stolen all of their electronic equipment. *Hallelujah!* The punch line to this story is that this is the third time it has been stolen. On the first occasion, the Imam encouraged his people to pray for the thief to change his ways. The same request was made when the thief hit the second time. However, this time the Imam is asking his people to pray that the thief will die. Thank you, Allah! Whatever the outcome for the thief, we are most grateful for the relative quiet this has brought.

**GOODNESS AND MERCY STEAL THE SHOW:** Everywhere we go, the dogs make quite a sensation. Though not especially large dogs (60 pound Australian shepherds), they are huge in comparison to the scrawny bush dogs that most Africans are familiar with. For the most part the adults (especially men) are literally terrified of them and have dubbed them “lion-dogs”. That's fine, they are serving their purpose. But for some reason, the children really like them and will even play with them. They have a couple of tricks they do which the children like but the fun really starts when we play football (soccer) with them. Both dogs are very intense when playing ball and Goodness will do elaborate jumps just to catch the ball which brings great cheers and laughter from the kids. They walk well with us through the markets and villages (off lead) and are very tolerant of all the attention. But once at home, they turn off the charm and move into protective mode. They are doing remarkably well and we surely do appreciate having them as part of the family.

We love and miss you all but are so glad to be here. You all remain in our prayers as you faithfully serve our Great Saviour, Jesus Christ.

*Stephen and Laura Holt*



*Left: Baptism in Bo.*

*Right: With the chief of Baomahun who is receiving the donated medical supplies.*



*Conducting song service (left) in Baomahun prior to the Bible study (right). The light is from the camera flash; the room had a single light bulb powered by a borrowed generator.*



*Some of the many children residing in Baomahun.*