



STEPHEN & LAURA HOLT

GATHER UP THE FRAGMENTS THAT REMAIN THAT NOTHING BE LOST

JOHN 6:12

JANUARY – MARCH 2009

PRAYER LETTER & MINISTRY UPDATE

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Dear Praying Family and Friends;

“Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable” (Psalms 145:3). We rejoice that we have a God who is so great that the small details of life are as easy to Him as creating heavens and the earth. In December, 2008 we returned to our home church in DeLand, FL from 11 months of travel during which time we visited 48 churches, burned 2535 gallons of gasoline, and traveled 30,000 miles. With all those miles behind us we rejoice to report that we had no major mechanical problems with either the truck or the trailer. Our deputation journey has been a joy from start to finish and we have made the best friends anyone could hope for – God’s people are the best.

On January 24th, it was with some sadness that we passed our travel trailer on to Pastor Ray Williamson in Seminole, AL. For the few meetings we have left we will be using prophet chambers or hotels. We have lived in our 18 foot trailer since August, 2007, our last year of Bible school, and it felt like saying goodbye to an old friend. We want to express our deepest thanks to Brother Sam Acebal for allowing us to use his guest house while we are in DeLand preparing to leave for Africa.

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS: After leaving Green Bay, WI at the end of October, we traveled to Bossier City, LA where our dear friend Stephen Sorrell, who recently returned from the mission field of Sri Lanka, is now the pastor of Shady Grove Baptist Church. His son, Nick, will be returning to Sri Lanka to continue in the work begun by his dad. I highly recommend Brother Nick to any churches interested in keeping an important and fruitful work going.

As we finish our deputation ministry, our meetings have been somewhat scattered. During the months of November and December, we have been in Louisiana, Alabama, western Florida, South Carolina, Virginia and Tennessee. Our stop in South Carolina was particularly special. Pastor Rick Kirchinger and Alpine Baptist Church in Columbia have supported us for over two years though we had never met. We were grateful for the opportunity to personally thank this congregation for their faithful care for us.

At the end of December, we returned to DeLand, Florida for five weeks. During this time we emptied our trailer, began sorting and packing our personal belongings, and began the process of obtaining airline tickets and visas for my trip to Liberia and Sierra Leone. Due to an earlier schedule change, we were also able to be at our home church for our annual Bible Conference which was a special blessing for us.

Following our time back in Florida, we had meetings scheduled in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia. At the end of January, we were scheduled to be with Pastor Travis Alltop in Danville, KY. While traveling from a four day meeting in Memphis, TN to Danville, Pastor Alltop called to inform us that they were in the area affected by a severe storm. With the ice damage, flooding, and no electricity at the church or his home, we rescheduled and will visit them in March. Please remember the Bluegrass Pike Baptist Church family in your prayers as they make repairs and recover from the storm damage.

A MINISTRY OF
HELPS IN
WEST AFRICA

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We were especially blessed to be in mission conferences held by Cornerstone Baptist Church in Carthage, TN; Pastor Ron Ralph, and Bible Believers' Baptist Church in Virginia Beach, VA; Pastor Tim MacDonald. Our heartfelt thanks to your congregations for their outstanding hospitality, kindness, and extreme generosity.

MINISTRY PREPARATIONS: On March 26th, I fly from Orlando to Chicago where I will rendezvous with Brothers Adam Brockett and David Webster. From there we travel to Monrovia, Liberia where we will hold two weeks of training for indigenous church leaders during the day and evangelistic meetings at night. We will then assist Allen Johnson of Wings Bearing Precious Seed for an additional week of training and Bible distribution. Following our three weeks in Liberia, Adam and I will take ground transportation to Sierra Leone where I will begin making the necessary housing arrangements for our move. Please be in prayer about this. We have a good lead on a rental house in the area where we would like to begin ministering. However, legal agreements are a bit different in West Africa where the "law" is often superseded by traditions, customs, and greed. Please pray that any contract we enter into will be honored. I plan to be in Sierra Leone for nearly three months during which time I will be assessing the feasibility of traveling in a village-to-village circuit for Bible study and discipleship training. Another task during my visit will be to apply for Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) status in Sierra Leone. As a charitable organization, this should protect incoming shipments from the heavy (and corrupt) import fees. Please make this a matter of special prayer as anything and everything is slow in West Africa and I would truly like to have the process completed before I return to the States in mid-July. In February, we incorporated as "Gather The Fragments Baptist Mission" which is necessary to apply for NGO status.

Upon my return from Africa, things will begin to move very quickly for us. We will be ordering and packing a container to ship personal and ministry items; we will be finishing our last phase of meetings taking us into Texas; lastly, we will be saying farewell to family and friends. All of the missionaries we have talked to have told us to budget more time than we think necessary because this process will take longer than we realize. As of the writing of this letter, we are planning to be in Sierra Leone by November.

In March we have two weeks of meetings in Tennessee and Kentucky. I am happy to report that our next prayer letter will also include a report from my trip to Liberia and Sierra Leone. Laura will be staying in Florida while I am in Africa. Please keep her in your prayers during my absence. I will be leaving her with quite a work list! In addition to procuring supplies for our move, another one of her tasks is obedience training for our two Australian Shepherds. With only a token police force, nominal "rule of law", and no electricity, home-security becomes the responsibility of each family and well trained dogs are simply a prudent part of life for a couple of Americans living in West Africa. Being shepherd dogs, we decided to use the Shepherd's Psalm and named our boys Goodness and Mercy. They have become very dear members of our family and we hope they will be following us for many years!

"For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God" (1 Thessalonians 3:9). Our meager words cannot express our heartfelt gratitude for your faithful prayer and financial support. We truly appreciate each one of you. Please scroll down to view photos from our recent travels.

By His Grace;

Stephen and Laura Holt



At Spring City Baptist Church, Cleveland OH in traditional African clothing preparing to address the church school children.



Addressing combined Sunday school classes during the mission conference at Bible Believers' Baptist Church in Virginia Beach, VA.



Working the streets of Brewton, AL with pastor Lee Cadenhead (not shown) of Ridge Road Baptist Church.



While ministering at a nursing home near Memphis, TN we met Romelia Shelton. She is 100 years old and faithfully taught Sunday school for nearly 60 years! Well done thou good and faithful servant.



Now 7 months old, Goodness [R] and Mercy enjoyed some time to romp on Virginia Beach. Despite the cold February air, Goodness was eager to play in the water while Mercy was content to stay dry. While I am in Africa, the "boys" will be going through some training to prepare them for life as our protection pups.

