

GATHER THE FRAGMENTS BAPTIST MISSION

Stephen & Laura Holt

JANUARY 2010 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
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A MINISTRY
OF HELPS IN
WEST AFRICA

Dear Praying Family and Friends;

This letter is longer than usual but there is much to report; we hope you find it interesting.

ON A HILL FAR AWAY: On Monday, January 11, we traveled from Allen Town to Baomahun for a two week stay to begin the preliminary process of building our house. Your effectual prayers moved the hearts of the community leadership to graciously give us the use of a large and lovely parcel of property; a hill at the edge of the village. This arrangement is similar to a lease though no money is involved for the land itself. We will essentially be caretakers of the property for as long as we choose to stay and we are allowed to develop the property. Should we ever decide to leave, the property, along with all improvements, will return to the community. We are currently working with a contractor and will be building a small cement block house on the top of the hill. Our motivation to build is simple – money; four years of rent more than pays for the building project. Additionally, our house will be much more sanitary and structurally sound than the mud block homes in Baomahun which often sustain serious damage during the rains. Prayerfully, we anticipate moving into our new home by the end of March, just ahead of the rainy season. Additionally by this time next year, our hope and goal is to complete the construction of a multi-purpose building where we will hold Bible school, children's church, family training, and evangelistic outreach throughout the week. In the mean time, we will hold classes in the open-air community center when available. Having our own screened-in class room will give us liberty of schedule and use while providing essential protection from the life-threatening, malaria-carrying mosquitoes.

On the second day of our current stay in Baomahun, I was laid out with a serious case of malaria. To say I was sick is an understatement. Laura nursed me through four very rough days of hallucinations, convulsions, and brain-burning fever while also attending to the business necessary to advance our building project, showing the contractor our proposed site and meeting with the village representatives for their approval. Malaria is endemic in this mountain village and the strain is becoming drug resistant. Although I was taking the preventative medication most recommended for this area, we have since learned from the medical officer at the clinic that the effectiveness varies according to a person's immune system. We will continue to use this prophylaxis with a modified regimen. As of the writing of this letter, I am much improved but still weak and tired, a side effect of the treatment. This does *NOT* fit into my schedule.

SHOWERS OF BLESSING: At the back side of our hill, following a path through the 10-12 foot savanna grass and brush is a shallow river. Covered by a dense canopy of trees, this secluded place is cool and quiet (by West African standards). The dogs are strong swimmers and love to play in the water; they will fetch a ball or a stick for as long as we can stand there and throw it for them. This delightfully private spot is a pleasure to visit at the end of a noisy busy day and we thank the Lord for this added bonus.

KINDOYA TRAINING HOSPITAL: The last of our donated medical equipment and supplies has found the perfect home. Most of the remaining items were surgical supplies which were beyond the use of the small bush hospital in Baomahun. Through the assistance of a brother in Christ we learned of a small private hospital in Bo. This hospital also runs a nursing school and we were privileged to meet several of the students along with graduates who are now employed there. These supplies will not only be a blessing to the patients who receive care at this hospital but will assist in the training of these young nurses as well.

II TIMOTHY 1:7 FOR GOD HATH NOT GIVEN US THE SPIRIT OF FEAR: At the end of December, during a previous trip to Baomahun, Laura was asked to make a house visit to a young lady who, three days earlier, had given birth to a deformed girl. Upon arrival, she could see that the deformity was cleft palate and the infant had six fingers on each tiny hand. The parents, gripped by the bondage of fear, were refusing to feed the baby believing that the devil had caused the deformity. Their superstitions teach them that to feed or even name the child would tell the devil that they accept the baby. No nursing mother would express milk into a cup to feed the infant for fear that their own child would be cursed and no expectant mother would even look upon the baby for the same reason. While holding the dying child, Laura earnestly pleaded with the women to find a woman who would give the life sustaining milk. She did her best to explain that this was not the curse of the devil but rather a common deformity which could easily be corrected. Reluctantly, the grandmother consented to allow us to take the very weak baby to a charity hospital outside of Bo but before we could leave, the little girl died. She is now safe in the arms of Jesus without deformity but her parents, who are Christian, as well as the whole community are still held captive in the snare of the devil. Without sound Bible training and teaching, even the Christians in these remote villages cannot free themselves from the fear and bondage in which generations of superstition and witchcraft have them bound. Unfortunately Laura never had the opportunity to speak with the mother. Women who give birth to deformed infants or even twins are often accused of having an affair with the devil and are socially ostracized. This young mother was too afraid to talk to Laura possibly believing that she would think ill of her. Please pray for this situation as we desire to talk to the parents and help them grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:18) thereby breaking the bonds of superstition and fear.

We wish to be a blessing to this community in whatever capacity we are able (James 2). When we move into our house, we will keep a supply of baby formula and other essentials on hand so we can be prepared when this happens again. Currently, in times of medical emergency, the clinic must wait for a vehicle to arrive from Bo which can take as long as 3 hours *one way*. We have offered the use of our vehicle to the clinic for emergency evacuations. With the mining company making ready to begin heavy industrial mining operations, the potential for serious injuries increases.

PSALM 19:10 MORE TO BE DESIRED ARE THEY THAN GOLD: Having this extended time in Baomahun has afforded us the opportunity to learn more about the lives and culture of the people here. It is disheartening to watch young children walking to the filthy open-pit mines with heavy burdens on their heads instead of walking to school. Their parents would have them labor for 10-12 hours in search of gold rather than give them the gift of education so they can learn to read and have the hope of a better future. While working the mines, many of these children contract malaria and die; their little malnourished bodies have nothing to fight the disease and soon they lose the battle. Laura will be ministering among these children and greatly covets your prayers for wisdom and insight. I will be taking students from the Bible school into the mining areas for evangelism and prayerfully these parents will look to the God of heaven who *made* the gold they labor to find in the dust of the earth. For clarification, these open-pit mines are operated by free-lance miners who are not connected with the British mining company mentioned in our November prayer letter. Once the mining company moves forward in its development, many of these artisan miners will be shut down. However, that will not stop the use of children for labor; families will just move to another area and begin mining again. The British company will be bringing many legitimate job opportunities to this area as well as aiding in community development.

II CORINTHIANS 6:17 WHEREFORE COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM, AND BE YE SEPARATE: When Joseph Kaitar was gloriously born again in 2004, he came out from among his Muslim brethren and separated from his old life. He is the only one in his family of 7 siblings who is saved. While mining gold in Baomahun, he joined himself to a small group of Christians who were trying to form a church. Joseph, at that time the only one among them who could read, would meet with these believers and read the Bible out loud to them. This is the humble beginning of Baomahun Baptist Church (BBC East) one of the indigenous churches we will be assisting. Joseph has left the gold mining to the many fortune seekers in the area and now works as a carpenter but is also a tireless soul-miner. Recognizing people's need to hear the Gospel, he currently makes evangelistic excursions into other villages. This dear brother is intensely eager to learn as much Bible he can so he will be more effective in his efforts. There are others like Joseph in this area that are doing what they can but just need some help with training, guidance, materials, and lots of encouragement; please pray for them. The purpose for our starting a Bible school is to provide these helps. Being located in Baomahun makes it centrally accessible by foot to the many scattered remote villages in the surrounding area.

NEW GROUND: 15 miles from Baomahun is a boys' boarding school for Junior and Senior Secondary students (the equivalent of our grades 7-12). The school is very remote and has 200 boys in attendance; about 50% is non-Muslim. Having learned that there is no church or pastor going into the school to provide church services, I volunteered to help to the principal. He is a Seventh Day Adventist but was thrilled someone would take such an interest in his boys. We will begin holding services for the boys once a month but he has asked us to come as often as we are able. This will be a great training ground for the young men in Bible school as they learn to prepare Sunday school lessons, lead singing, deliver a message, and counsel these boys from the Bible.

PRAYER REQUESTS: Once we are moved into Baomahun we will be starting language training for Krio, the common Pidgin English spoken throughout the country. Additionally, Laura will be learning Mende, the tribal language most common in this area. Many of the women in this region, being less educated than the men, do not speak Krio and even fewer speak or understand English so Laura will need both languages. Please pray as we tackle this project at (undisclosed ages)!

We are working with the chief medical officer at the Baomahun medical post to bring in as many as 6 nurses and/or mid-wives to provide training for the nurses from this village as well as from other medical posts within this chiefdom (similar to a county). The greatest need is in the area of obstetric and pediatric nursing care; also needed is refresher training in emergency care as well as nutrition basics. Sierra Leone has one of the highest infant and maternal death rates in the world along with a very high death rate for children up to age five. We would like to conduct this sometime during the dry season (November through April) of 2011; the specific time frame and duration has not been determined and is contingent upon having our classroom finished. Please be in general prayer regarding this work; we will keep you updated as details develop. Additionally, if you are qualified, have good teaching skills, and are interested in helping, please e-mail me at holtfamily1611@gmail.com and we will supply specific details regarding what is needed. If you can get here, we will house you, feed you, and work you to death. You will only need to supply training materials for your specific area of expertise and a willing heart.

As always we are most grateful for your prayers.

Stephen and Laura Holt