



GATHER THE FRAGMENTS BAPTIST MISSION

Stephen & Laura Holt

APRIL 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
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A MINISTRY
OF HELPS IN
WEST AFRICA

Dear Praying Family and Friends

We have moved out of our rented Allen Town house and it appears that our wilderness wanderings are over. We are now in our home in Baomahun and although there is still work to be completed we are getting settled in. We only have to live in the house for one year to be here longer than we have been anywhere else for the last six years. The day we arrived the children from grades one and two of Baomahun Baptist Primary School, along with their teacher, Miss Hannah, marched from school, through town, and up our driveway singing Christian songs and welcoming us. What a joy to hear approximately 50 young voices singing praises to the Lord – what a grand welcome!

As we struggle to understand a new language and learn different usages for familiar words, communications regularly break down. We have come to a better understanding of the conveyance of the 4.88 acre parcel of property where our house is located. This land is actually being given to us and will be the legal possession of Gather The Fragments Baptist Mission, Inc. Because Christians are a very small minority (with Islam being the majority), the local Christian community approached the town leadership requesting property which could be developed and used for the furtherance of the Christian faith in this town and the surrounding area. Defined in the written contract are the obligations of the community as well as GTFBM, Inc. We will sign a document that requires us to teach the Bible, preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and promote Christianity in Baomahun and outlying villages. The community's responsibility will be to ensure that there are no future claims to the property, that the mission is free from hindrance to carry out its obligations, and that Christian converts will not be harassed by members of other religions. How's that for religious freedom!

HE SAID UNTO HIS DISCIPLES, GATHER UP THE FRAGMENTS THAT REMAIN, THAT NOTHING BE LOST (JOHN 6:12):

Baomahun is a Mende word for which we have recently learned the meaning. Rice is one of the main cash and sustenance crops in this area and, as in Bible times, there are always gleanings left behind; fragments that might otherwise be wasted are gathered by the poor. Baomahun literally means “village of gleanings”. How appropriate for the Lord of the harvest to send us to “the village of gleanings” so we can gather fragments. We could not have planned that!

MINISTRY PROGRESS: Due to an unexpected and unsolicited large donation of funds, we have been able to begin construction of our class room *months* ahead of our planned schedule. We expected to have to postpone construction until the conclusion of the rainy season which is usually October or November. Now we will be able to begin utilizing this space in just a few more weeks. Below is our proposed schedule which we include here for your prayer purposes.

Congregational Teaching

Sunday Evening: Basic Discipleship and Bible Doctrines

Bible School Teaching

Monday Evening: Chronological Teaching for New Believers – Genesis to the Ascension

Tuesday Evening: New Testament Survey

The Ruth Group for Women (Laura)

Character Studies for Christian Development (first Friday evening of each month)

Little Fragments Bible School (Laura – open to children who attend Baomahun Baptist Primary School)

Sunday Morning: Ages 6-8

Sunday Afternoon: Ages 9-12

he Little Fragments Bible School is an outstanding opportunity to reach children which we otherwise might not have access to. Although there is an Islamic school in town, a large portion of the students who attend BBC's primary school are Muslim and we are hopeful that this will be an opening to their families. There could be as many as 75 students per session so I am certain that Laura will greatly appreciate your prayers!

Additionally, I will meet with the leading men of Baomahun Baptist Church two Friday evenings per month to help them with issues pertaining to church order. Apart from Islam, the Pentecostal movement is the largest influencing factor in Sierra Leone and truly all of West Africa. BBC suffers from some of this influence but they are, for the most part, desirous to learn how to order themselves according to the Bible. Please pray for the one or two who could make things difficult for those who are clearly sincere. We are already seeing positive changes but the enemy will not appreciate our attempts at taking new ground.

Our hearts have been very burdened for the children who labor in the open-pit gold mines. These children put in long hours and we have struggled to plan a time when we can hold Bible classes for them. We recently found out that most of these freelance mines do not operate on Fridays (the Muslim day of worship) so the children would be free to come to our classroom. We are structuring what we will call "ABC – Afternoon Bible Club". This Bible club will be open to town children ages 8-10 but we will be specifically targeting the mining children. Again, we are prayerful that this might be an opening to the families of these children.

TOWN GROWTH: When we first started making visits to Baomahun, we were told by employees of the mining company to expect to see the town grow as the mine moves forward in its development. We were amazed to see the amount of new construction and development that had taken place in our brief six-week absence. Many people will be moving here seeking jobs and the number of children will greatly expand as well. I am organizing a public ministry outreach for the church men on Friday afternoons which, as stated above, is the ideal time to reach the miners. We will publicly proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, offer tracts, new testaments, and John/Romans booklets.

We have already received requests for Bible training from surrounding villages that I visited last summer. Some of these churches have no pastor but are meeting regularly and doing what they can on their own with little Bible understanding. Some of these groups are also requesting women's training from Laura. We are trying to keep things in balance and not spread ourselves too thin too quickly. We need to solidly establish the home base before adding more. Please keep the Christian brothers and sisters of these villages in your prayers; we do not want them to become discouraged if we cannot get to them soon. Better yet, pray that the Lord of the harvest would send more laborers; there is a lot that can be done here. In the mean time, we are praying that some of the leading men in these churches will be able to come to Baomahun for training. Travel is the main difficulty especially with the approaching rains.

VISAS APPROVED: Before leaving Allen Town we were finally able to satisfy all the governing agencies in Sierra Leone (not to mention having paid large fees to each). We have both obtained our resident-status visas and I now have a driver's license. We will be required to renew the visas annually but do not need to leave the country prior to their renewal.

SPEAKING OF DRIVER'S LICENSE: On the very day I received my license, I was arrested in Freetown for the heinous crime of "obstructing traffic". This is actually quite laughable because traffic in Freetown is always obstructed; it can take hours to go just a few miles. My offense was that I did not move ahead quickly enough when the vehicle in front of me inched forward about eight feet. We were taken to the local police division and while Laura stayed in the truck (fervently praying), I was taken into the office to answer for my crime. To make a long story short, I informed the officers that I was simply not going to pay them a bribe because I had committed no crime. Their answer was that they were not looking for a bribe but that they just wanted to make things "easy" for me so I could avoid going to court. Because they saw a foreigner, they assumed they had found a deep pocket that would rather pay them a handsome bribe than go to court. When I confidently assured them I had no problem going to court, things started to turn in my favor because they knew there was no offense. After pointing out their hypocrisy in not applying the law equally and quoting several Bible verses such as Proverbs 11:1 "A false balance is abomination to the LORD" and Proverbs 20:10 "Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the LORD", they backed down. An hour and a half later the charges were dropped and I was released from custody. As I was leaving, the booking officer asked if I would give her a Bible. I told her that I did not have any with me but assured her I would return the following day with one. In West Africa, a man's word means very little so you can imagine their surprise when I did indeed return with not just one but 12 Bibles along with 12 New Testaments and a stack of Essence of Christianity booklets. In Sierra Leone, if people think they can push you around they *WILL*; they actually respect you more if you boldly but politely stand your ground. 2 Timothy 4:2 puts it this way, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." They were able to see my faith by my works and it had a positive impression especially with the Muslims.

Please be sure to visit our website and view the photos that accompany this letter. If you receive this letter electronically you may simply scroll down to find the photos. As always we are most grateful for your prayers and support.

Stephen and Laura Holt