

GATHER THE FRAGMENTS BAPTIST MISSION

Stephen & Laura Holt



Dear Praying Family and Friends

FIRST THE BAD NEWS: Due to issues of personal integrity concerning our contractor, our classroom is now six weeks behind schedule and there are still things that need completion or correction on that building. Additionally, there were many problems with the house which are in the process of being corrected and we have just this week gotten functional doors! Unfortunately this has consumed way too much time, energy, and mental capacity. The problems are further compounded due to the difficulties of communications here (no cell service) and getting supplies in is a major effort. But praise the Lord, that will soon be over and we can focus our complete attentions on Gathering Up The Fragments.

BIBLE SCHOOL: In spite of the classroom being incomplete, we are scheduled to begin Bible training in mid July. Interest is still high with 10 men expressing desire to attend. I was concerned that the repeated delays would dampen the interest but this does not appear to be the case. We will hold classes in the afternoon so the lack of mosquito mesh on the windows will not be a problem. If we start now, we will conclude the first round of classes at the end of the rainy season. I will then take these men to the surrounding villages where they will put their training into practical application through evangelism, personal work, and public ministry. The school and public ministry without pay is winnowing the less committed as many expect the missionary to pay them a pastor's salary. I do not intend to start churches with foreign money but rather will help local men learn how to reach their own, learn and understand the scriptures, and plant indigenous churches.

PUBLIC MINISTRIES: On Friday, April 16, we began our public ministry at home in Baomahun. This consists of two phases. Every Friday morning I, along with any available church men, head out for evangelism. We walk through town talking with people in the markets or those sitting in the shade of their verandas. Since so much of life here takes place out-of-doors, we usually attract a crowd and what starts with a few people easily doubles within a few minutes. These sessions can get quite enlivened and sometimes even productive. We have not seen anyone saved through this effort but we are getting established within the community, they know we are here. The two groups we typically deal with are the Pentecostals and the Muslims. My preferred sparring opponents are the Muslims, as they will typically use their Koran to back up their position. However, the Pentecostals have only their dreams and visions. We have even gotten invited back to a few Muslim homes for a follow-up round. I like to ask them if Mohammad is a prophet can they tell me just one prophecy he made that has come to pass in the 1500 years since his death. It always leaves them wondering and prayerfully during our many revisits we can start showing them the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. In the evening we follow up this personal evangelism with open-air preaching. Since people have no place to go, they often hang around for 30 to 40 minutes or even more which gives enough time to develop a message. We have seen people bring benches out to the side of the "road" and take in the entire session! A core group of our men are faithful to this effort and boldly proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is exciting to see their zeal in action. There is always a lively question and answer exchange following the two or three preachers; it is not unusual to be there until after dark with an open Bible and flashlights showing people "thus saith the LORD." Our web site photo section is longer than usual this time as there is much to show you. Among other things, you will see pictures of the street work. If you receive this letter via U.S. Postal service, please visit our web site, gatherthefragments.com, and click on the link for "Current Prayer Letter" where you will also find our photo pages.

SCHOOL MINISTRIES: My Bible class at Koyeima Boys' School has concluded for this academic year. The interest was quite marginal so it is uncertain at this time if I will return when the next year commences in September. However, we have also begun a class at Niawa-Lenga Junior Secondary School (equivalent of grades 7-9). This school is a co-educational community school (not a boarding school as Koyeima) which is located in the farming community of Sahn and services many smaller surrounding villages. Sahn is only 27 miles away but it takes three bone-jarring hours to get there. Understanding the difficulty of travel, the principal arranges the schedule to allow us one full day each month; he is very desirous for his students to have the Bible classes and is quite cooperative. We start the day with a joint session for boys and girls (some students are as old as 20). After a lunch break, we split the group with Laura teaching the girls and I the boys. Then we have some refreshments followed by an activity.

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

Please send
correspondence to
the above address

PERSONAL
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A MINISTRY
OF HELPS IN
WEST AFRICA

The atmosphere with the students has been a bit strained but the principal explained that being raised in this isolated farming community they have very limited exposure. We are the first white people that most of the students have seen and they are quite intimidated. But they are beginning to relax and we are looking forward to continuing with them next year. Laura got the girls to lighten up a bit by allowing them to braid her long hair. Of course, the girls loved that but the braids did not survive the ride home, Laura declaring never again as it was very uncomfortable. Most of the road to Sahn is very narrow, more like a trail, and very rugged, occasionally requiring four-wheel-drive, and through very dense bush. On our first tip back home, we had the thrill of seeing a *HUGE* cobra as it crossed the road ahead of us: glad we were in the truck!

SPECIAL THANKS: We are very grateful to Allen Johnson and Wings Bearing Precious Seed for their large donation of Bibles, tracts, and other Gospel materials, which we shipped in our container. On our web site photo page, you will see some of those Bibles and other evangelistic materials being distributed to the teachers in Sahn. We also wish to thank Pastor Scott Suttle and our dear friends at Spring City Baptist Church, Cleveland, VA for the use of their publishing room. Last spring while I was in Liberia, Laura accompanied a small team from our home church to assist with the assembly of 10,000 John/Romans booklets using a cover she designed specifically for Sierra Leone. These were distributed to the students at Sahn along with Gospel tracts. It is a blessing and a privilege to minister among those who can read and use these materials. All was gratefully received.

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS: Quite by “accident” we have discovered that having pictures to accompany my adult Sunday school teaching really helps these people to grasp basic doctrines so Laura has been designing large-scale illustrations as we work chronologically through the Bible. The response to this technique has been so good that we are now using it in other ministry areas. Since most of the themes work for evangelism, the illustrations are utilized in public ministry here in Baomahun and will soon be used in outlying villages as well. We are also using them in the school outreach, which aids the students in their memory of the lessons. Most of these illustrations are done in a progressive fashion revealing more picture as the story line progresses. Laura has become quite creative in designing fold-down pages and concealed portions of the image. Consequently, she is kept very busy as this teaching method expands. The illiteracy rate in Sierra Leone is among the highest in the world so we are very grateful for the Lord’s leading in this new direction as it really is helping to get the message out! One of our church men overheard some women in the market talking about the lesson from the previous Sunday – it really stuck with them which, of course, is what we want. A future project will be telling the old, old story in pictures with wordless tracts. Again, please see our web photo page for some pictures of these illustrations.

FIELD ADDRESS: We are happy to report that we now have a post office box and are back in touch with the rest of the world. We have learned that services such as banking, postal, etc. are woefully inadequate in Bo and trips into Freetown will be more regular than initially expected so this is where we have our box. Please understand, this is a rough 6-hour ride that we will probably only make every two or three months. Should you send a letter it may be quite some time before we actually get it and then have opportunity to respond so please be patient, every letter will be answered (I have a diligent secretary who enjoys writing letters). Most mail takes nearly a month just to arrive and it is prudent to use registered mail or it may be lost (stolen). You may also send any correspondence to our home church address as our mission support services will be forwarding packages of mail periodically.

Stephen & Laura Holt
C/O P.O. Box 10
Freetown Post Office
Siaka Stevens Street
Freetown, Sierra Leone
West Africa

Language training has not proceeded as hoped. Finding a suitable instructor has proved difficult. The focus of life for the residents of Baomahun is *GOLD* so reading and writing are unimportant. Laura has picked up some Mende much to the delight of the women who enjoy trying to teach her. We both feel that if we could learn to read Krio and Mende, we would do better with speaking it and we are now working on getting grammar books from the principal at the Sahn school. We ask your continued prayer for this as we move ahead into outlying villages. This is especially critical for work among the women and girls who are less educated.

We have been in country for eight months and in Baomahun for four months. We have learned a lot about the culture, the people, and ourselves. We are in good health and are privileged with the opportunity to serve the Lord in Sierra Leone. We could not be here without your dedication and faithfulness to pray for and financially support this endeavor. You remain in our prayers as you serve the Captain of our salvation on the “Western Front”.

Because He is Worthy,

Stephen and Laura Holt