

GATHER THE FRAGMENTS BAPTIST MISSION

Stephen & Laura Holt



NOVEMBER 2010 – ANNIVERSARY PRAISE 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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Dear Praying Family and Friends

November 4th marked our first year anniversary in Sierra Leone; Lord teach us to number our days. The time has passed quickly, our joy is full, and we are eager to see what the upcoming year will accomplish. The primary focus of Gather the Fragments Baptist Mission remains being a ministry of helps to local churches through Bible teaching, providing teaching and preaching tapes, assisting with evangelism and discipleship, and provoking to love and good works. This letter will give you a look ahead to some of the projects we prayerfully expect to implement as we strive to realize our mission focus in this second year and beyond.

BIBLE CLASSES: Our Bible school has regularly been well attended. It is a thrill to see the spiritual lights come on as we make our way through the book of John. I provide the students with a typed lesson outline and ask them to read the chapter while reviewing the outline. This they do as best they can and their reading will frequently lead to a lively question and answer exchange during class sessions. Oftentimes, by the nature of their questions it is obvious their consciences have caused them serious consternation over their own spiritual state and deep concern for their family's standing. One of the main reasons for choosing Baomahun as our home base is its central proximity to many outlying villages. We are now getting men from these areas who attend Bible classes, weather conditions and circumstances permitting. It is exciting to see this growth. Bible school and exportable training is a seed planted during my first semester at the DeLand School of the Bible in 2004. I also continue to teach adult Sunday School at the Baomahun church and the teaching is beginning to cause positive changes. Most of the men attending Bible classes are also in church leadership positions; as they learn and believe Bible truths they carry their understanding into the church services and home life. Change is coming! Slowly, as the Lord opens their eyes and hearts to the truth, we are beginning to see the Pentecostal doctrines flushed-out and replaced with sound Bible doctrine. To God be the glory!

EPHESIANS 6:12 FOR WE WRESTLE NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD: Our consistent public presence in town has aroused the attention of the Islamic leadership. When dealing with Muslims, I gently and sincerely encourage them to learn and understand more about their faith by asking their Imam the questions they ask me. Because the Imams have no satisfactory answers to give those following in blind faith, our evangelistic efforts are not appreciated as it exposes them for the liars and hypocrites they are. In response to this, the three mosques in our small town have begun a counter-campaign. They have obtained hate messages recorded at some of the larger mosques in Freetown, which they now broadcast through their loudspeakers mounted atop each mosque as part of their daily call to prayer and worship service. They are deliberately trying to cause contention and confusion within the Christian minority of our town. Some of the church members living closer to the mosques have told us how offensive and false their message is. Within the local government there is no one to appeal to as the entire leadership is Muslim and all are related. So we will just depend upon our Lord for direction and protection.

This Muslim hate campaign has worked together for good. We are now seriously considering operating a small radio transmitter from atop Mission Mountain. Initially, we hope to service Baomahun and as many of the surrounding villages as we can reach. The Muslim hate-speech spewed from the mosques' public address systems can only reach the center of our town but the truth sent out over the airwaves will reach many more ears and when followed up with visitation will reach many more hearts. Their message is heard five times a day and that briefly. Prayerfully our goal is to broadcast God's truth several hours a day every day. This has been a ministry goal from the beginning and it now appears to be the right time to move ahead on this project.

A MINISTRY
OF HELPS IN
WEST AFRICA

We plan to broadcast teaching, preaching, scripture reading in English and two local languages, as well as Christian hymn music. For longevity and economy, we are hoping to run most or all of the equipment with solar power. Please be in prayer as I begin the tedious process of licensing with the government. Every form requires a multiplicity of signatures and each signature requires an envelope. Anywhere else it would be called a bribe but here it is simply the golden rule: they who have the gold rule; we must play by their “rules” if we expect to play at all.

LAMENTATIONS 3:51 MINE EYE AFFECTETH MINE HEART: We have had such a positive response to Laura’s large-scale illustrations that we have decided to make them mobile. She will paint high quality watercolor originals which will then be scanned, color printed on card stock, laminated, and comb bound into booklet format. The smaller versions will be a tremendous asset to our evangelistic outreach ministry and circuit training into the more remote villages. This is a project we are particularly excited about as we can immediately witness the impact the pictures have on people; they have opened many an opportunity to witness in places not previously friendly to our evangelistic efforts. Because of the harsh environment, we must make the booklets as weather resistant and durable as possible. They receive rough treatment each session. After the lesson, people come to ask questions pointing, holding, and handling the pictures as they sincerely seek more understanding and help. Additionally, we want to provide copies to pastors and church leaders in our circuit villages to help them keep the lessons alive and the outreach effort going beyond their own village.

THE REGIONS BEYOND: Another ministry goal is now being realized as we venture beyond the borders of our “Jerusalem”. While Laura holds the fort at our Baomahun base of operations, Brother Joseph and I are making regular excursions into other areas. The first week of each month is dedicated to teaching at locations some distance from home necessitating an overnight. We begin with teaching for Pastor Prince Nallo at Grace Baptist Church in Bo on the first Sunday morning. The same afternoon we will be with a young church in Sembahun, another mining village just outside of Bo. Initially, the training will focus on the basic Bible doctrines and scriptures for evangelism. The next morning, Monday, we leave Bo to teach at Sahn Community School and then at Koyeima Boys' School later in the afternoon (these schools are off the road we travel back to Baomahun). We have about three hours of unscheduled time between these teaching sessions which we use to evangelize in the town of Sahn as well as other smaller villages scattered along the way. These villages are excellent examples of the illustrations' effectiveness as very few village people are able to read but most will readily engage and interact while hearing and seeing the Gospel message woven into the illustrations. On Sunday, November 7, we made our first visit to the small village of Njagbema Tambie (pronounce how you like). That Sunday the way was partially flooded from the previous night's rain so we were a few minutes late. When we arrived, the little church was full to overflowing; the pastor had invited a neighboring pastor to join us as well as several Muslim village leaders. The use of Laura’s illustrations and Brother Joseph’s translating during the Sunday school and service were better than we had expected and we were invited return as soon as possible. We have many standing invitations from churches in the surrounding area and as the Lord directs and time permits, we will add them to our circuit.



FROM LAURA'S JOURNAL: To give our readers a taste of life here, we will begin featuring entries from Laura's journal. These are spiritual insights and personal lessons gathered from observations of the culture, customs, and daily life. We hope they will be a blessing to you.

Recorded February 1, 2010

Psalm 45:8 All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.

The open markets here are quite the experience; people, voices, colors, animals, chaos – it is actually rather fun. But then there are the many smells, raw and pungent. Dirt, endless smoke, open sewer, throngs of sweaty bodies, meat stalls, fish – both fresh and smoked – and garbage everywhere. They all combine and mingle to make one overwhelming, unforgettable odor.

As we make our way through the markets, we generally know where to go to get what we need. We have gotten used to the sights and smells and we just mingle in with the rest of the crowd.

But on occasion, my olfactory senses are startled out of the ordinary. Something sweet and refreshing has arrested my attention: oranges. Women sitting on the ground with baskets of oranges peel away just the outer skin leaving the white pith attached to the flesh. These are sold as a kind of primitive juice box. You squeeze the orange gently, more like massaging it, thus releasing the juice which is still contained within the pith. You then bite off the end of your orange and suck the juice while continuing to squeeze.

Their delightful aroma is an oasis in the midst of the filth of the market. Their sweetness rises above even the foulest smell.

Isn't that just like our lovely Lord Jesus. Even a touch of the hem of His garment can relieve the heartaches that life brings. Leaning on His everlasting arms, encircled by His perfumed robe is the very place of peace, rest, and comfort despite what is happening all around.



As we pray and look for our Lord's soon return we try to live as though it were today but dream as if it were a hundred years away. We have big plans for the coming year and we are so grateful for your part in this ministry. Thank you for a year of faithfulness as we labor together for the cause of Christ.

Because He is Worthy,

Stephen and Laura Holt

Please view accompanying photo pages at gatherthefragments.com – click on “current prayer letter”