



Gather The Fragments Bible Mission

Stephen & Laura Holt
Sierra Leone, West Africa

NOVEMBER 2011

On the evening of Thursday October 20, I met my bride at Sierra Leone International Airport. After negotiating customs and making the 45 minute motor boat ride across the bay, we settled in for the night at the Freetown home of our friends and fellow missionaries, Larry and Jackie Owens who are currently in the States. After a few errands on Friday morning we set out for the 6 hour, 150 mile, bone-rattling ride from Freetown to Baomahun. It sure is good to have Laura home again! She accomplished a lot of work while in the States and we are anticipating the arrival of our container in Freetown on November 14. It will likely take about a week for it to clear customs and then it, too, will make the long overland journey to our town. We ask your continued prayers in this regard.

SANCTIFY THEM THROUGH THY TRUTH: THY WORD IS TRUTH: The Bible school in town continues to meet on Sunday and Friday afternoons. We have lost some of our regular students as they found much study to be a weariness to their flesh. However, our core group is still consistent and doing well. In our August prayer letter, I mentioned Dennis who has been in the Pentecostal church for nearly 15 years. He has faithfully attended our Bible institute since it started in September of 2010 and the continual exposure to the word of God is having its effect. Dennis has publicly defended the truth rightly divided and through sound doctrine stating “Thus saith the Lord,” has refuted some hard core Pentecostals who have recently moved back into town. These are sons of leading men in town and for Dennis to openly stand in opposition to them is a big step. Please keep Dennis in your prayers; he has a long way to go and he is very weak of character, often sliding back into his old ways but we are greatly encouraged by the progress he is making. It is important for our people to see one of their own making a break from the false doctrine of Pentecostalism.

As is true with anybody, being involved in service has proved beneficial to Dennis' growth. While Laura was away, I had Dennis conduct a summer children's program on Sunday mornings. I would assist him but he was held accountable for preparation and delivery of the lessons. The added benefit being that it removed both him and the children from the Pentecostal teaching being slipped in at the church.

In one of the villages I regularly visit, there is a lovely young lady named Christianna. She is very sweet natured, attentive, and gentle. Unfortunately for Christianna, she is afflicted with epilepsy. When she has a seizure, people scatter from her fearing that the devil is causing the convulsions and erratic behavior. Here is a girl with a legitimate health problem and people will blame it on the devil. However, when the Pentecostals in town throw themselves on the ground flailing around and screaming in “tongues”, strangely resembling an epileptic fit, they claim it is the Holy Spirit. I wonder, who has the real problem?

TEACHING AND PREACHING SCHEDULE: As we move into the dry season we will be getting back into our full circuit of travel as we teach, preach, and evangelize in more distant towns and villages which are difficult to reach during the rains.

We continue to hold a combined meeting on the last Sunday of the month for the Pelewahun-Tendabu group of churches. The meetings are rotated through the different church locations so I am able to visit each village fairly regularly. These pastors, church leaders, and people continue to be a blessing as we see them grow in zeal and desire to serve. I have been asked by Brother David Johnny, the leader of this group, to instruct these men in evangelism. “Our men know they need to be witnessing but they lack confidence; will you teach us how?” were Brother Johnny's words. I will be using a new publication by our pastor, James Knox, entitled “A Biblical Course in Witnessing” for this training.

On the first Sunday of the month I will once again be at Grace Baptist Church in Bo to assist pastor Prince Nallo. These two meetings are providing valuable training for the men from our Bible institute as they are regularly encouraged to accompany me and present the Sunday school lesson. My goal is to prepare them to be able to go out in teams of two so we can cover more ground. We are continually receiving requests from smaller villages within our chiefdom and we simply cannot keep up with the demand for teaching and preaching. To maximize time, I plan to stay two or three days in these towns and villages. We have offers for the use of school buildings and community centers for sleeping and meeting places. Some of these villages are only accessible by foot so we must make the best use of the dry season or, as the hymn says, “work for the night is coming.”

As the demand for teaching and preaching increases, so increases the need for Laura's illustrations. She is also beginning to work with a couple of our men to get some of their ideas for pictures which will help her learn some of the local nuances of custom and culture which may then be incorporated into the drawings. Her time is very full and her desk was piled high with work waiting for her return.

MISSION INTERN: Laura will be getting some much needed assistance from Aimee Tanselle who will join us in the winter of 2013. Aimee is currently a student in the Deland School of The Bible and will be graduating this December. She is actively involved in teaching through our home church's Child Evangelism Fellowship outreach as well as regularly teaching Sunday school. In addition to being a general help, her experience with children will allow us to expand the work in the villages on our circuit as there is currently no ministry for these children. Aimee is planning to spend a year with us and we are eagerly anticipating her arrival. You may read more about Aimee on our web site, gatherthefragments.com.

❧ *From Laura's Journal* ❧

I have planted, Apolos watered; but God gave the increase. I Corinthians 3:6

I have always enjoyed large-scale gardening. In particular I like the challenges of gardening in New England with its four distinct seasons and short growing period.

In West Africa the seasons are very different. The climate is tropical but our dry season is influenced by the Sahara desert to our north. This means two distinct extremes: *very* wet and *very* dry. Balancing these extremes brings frustrating challenges to this experienced gardener and I wonder – can you teach an old gardener new tricks?

Joseph Keitor, my field helper, must wonder the same thing. He politely tolerates my attempts at applying New England wisdom to West African conditions. He teaches me a lot.

As we move out of the rainy season, we must now look ahead to the dry. This peaks with the hot, dry Harmattan winds which bring storms of sand from the Sahara. Our days will be shrouded in “Harmattan Haze” - endless dust and sand which choke the air. Anything that is going to grow and survive that harsh weather must be planted now. There will be a long stretch where we get neither dew nor rain and plants must have their roots deeply set.

To stress the urgency of getting my seeds in, Joseph gave me some simple local wisdom, “Sista, let de rain meet your seeds in de soil.” He was telling me I needed to hasten my planting because the rains are nearly over. Profound in its simplicity – and motivating.

When Stephen and I came to Sierra Leone, we both felt strongly that we were just starting a work into which others would join and eventually take over. Our ages alone would suggest that; missionaries don't usually begin at 56 and 47! We are breaking up the fallow ground of the hearts of the people in Sierra Leone. We are moving the rocks, pulling the weeds, preparing the soil. We are planting the seeds. The seed must be in the heart to meet the one who will come behind us bringing the life-giving water. We are laborers together, each doing his part.

Today, in the heat of the noon hour, Stephen sowed the seed of the word of God in the hearts of those who would hear. It is slow going and we may never see the results of our labor but we faithfully plant the seed, trusting God for the increase.

And today, in the cool of the evening hour, I went out to my garden. As I tucked the seeds into the warm earth I could hear in the distance, beyond the hills glowing golden with the setting sun, the sound of thunder; the promise of coming rain which would meet my seeds in the soil.



THE RELIGION OF PEACE: Our town leaders, being all Muslim, decided this year that during Ramadan all residents of the town, Muslim or non-Muslim, must abide by the Islamic laws of dress. One afternoon, one poor woman, a Christian, was deemed by one of the town leaders to be “inappropriately” dressed. She was dragged into the open market, stripped of her clothes, and publicly beaten. Coming to her aid, her husband became involved along with some other friends. In the end the whole lot was taken to the police post in Mongeri 10 miles, one hour's drive, from our town. Being all Muslim themselves, the police handed down the judgment that the woman and her husband were responsible to pay damages to the town leader because he had been injured and claimed he lost some money and his cell phone in the process of beating this woman. He was not held accountable in any fashion because he was valiantly upholding the law! “Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light and light for darkness” (Isaiah 5:20). Please do not believe what the American news media wants you to believe about Islam. As the development of off-shore oil continues, and as mining of diamonds, gold, and other precious metals increases in Sierra Leone, the interest of Islamic nations also increases. There are outside influences encouraging a push for Sharia law and courting government acceptance through aid and development in what the UN classifies as the least livable country in the world, our Sierra Leone. The window of opportunity here may be brief; please pray for the teaching and preaching of the truth to have an effect which will remain should we need to leave. Please pray for souls to be saved out of the darkness and into the kingdom of light.

Thank you for your continued prayer and support.

Because He is Worthy

Stephen and Laura Holt