



GTFBM

Gather The Fragments Bible Mission

Stephen & Laura Holt
Sierra Leone, West Africa

FIELD REPORT: JUNE 2025

Greetings to our Family and Friends!

UPDATE ON LAURA: We are currently waiting for a very important test which, in March, could not be scheduled until July 7. We have prayed for a cancellation so it could be done earlier, but it doesn't look like that will come through. Laura has been able to attend evening church occasionally, and often has one or two ladies over for tea. These are a real boost to her spiritually. Most of the testing ordered by the doctors in Boston has been completed in Orlando. We are also waiting on the results of two tests from a specialized spinal tap. The test we are waiting for, a specialized EMG, is very important as it assesses the activity between the muscles and the nerves. We have decided to move all of Laura's neurological care to Boston. Her doctors in Orlando and Boston have discussed this via phone calls, and are in agreement that it is the best option since she will get the highly experienced care which she truly needs. Their mutual agreement gives us great confidence that this will be a good move.

On the exciting side for Laura is that she's been very busy in her "recliner office." She has some writing projects she's working on. But best of all, she has art projects she's developing not only for Illustrated Evangelism but also some new things are really taking shape. We will unveil these new projects when things are further along. A couple from our home church is going to be teaching Laura how to use AI for the painting portion of her Illustrated Evangelism projects. This will greatly speed up her production of the many new ideas we have. She will continue to develop her own preliminary drawings by hand, and then scan them into the AI program to "paint" them. This will be much easier on her health as the watercolor painting is very taxing which greatly slows things down. We certainly praise the Lord that Laura is still able to use her mind and creativity for Him. It is exciting to have this way to use AI to God's glory!

LONG-RANGE PLANS: Once Laura is diagnosed and established in a workable treatment plan, I will be heading back to Sierra Leone. Right now Laura still needs help until her symptoms are better managed, especially at night. She falls sometimes, and often requires me to feed her her medications due to the spasms. My plan is to leave before the coming dry season (aiming for September/October). This will give me time to do some much needed work around the compound. I will also work on scheduling for the coming dry season circuit. I am hoping for a 4-5 month circuit. I am also working on plans to visit another West African country, which I prefer to leave undisclosed for now. This trip is tentatively planned for late 2026 because it will take that long to arrange the logistics.. This is a very exciting prospect for GTF and I am looking forward to bringing you more news as I am able.

IN THE MEANTIME: Besides the many appointments for Laura, my time Stateside has been quite full and well used. I am participating in many weekly ministries through our church. Much of my time is utilized in developing a discipleship course of study. I am reworking some very useful materials I received from Bro Kieth Stensaas (Uganda) and Bro Lee Cadenhead (Zimbabwe). The need to modify these good materials is to put them into lower reading and comprehension levels so our pastors can better understand the information and then teach it to their congregations. Much time is also consumed on WhatsApp helping our men sort out problems, assisting them with planning evangelism work, and in general keeping them encouraged. "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28). Not at all a complaint; I am grateful to have so many circuit partner churches which which to give my time and care.

LAND ISSUE DEVELOPMENTS: In a word — None! The magistrate has decided, after all this time, that the court needs to actually see the land plus he wants it surveyed. There is no way to explain any of this. The land is legally surveyed and registered with the Ministry of Lands and Country Planning in Freetown. We are still in the rainy season so getting these men up our road to view

the property, and to have it surveyed would be no simple task. I am completely taken aback as to why all of the sudden they feel this so necessary. But, it's their country and we will play along with their decisions.

THE WORK CONTINUES: As mentioned in earlier reports, I had well equipped our circuit partner churches to carry out dry season evangelism without me. It is exciting to report that the churches have been faithful to use the Illustrated Evangelism books we provided. A few select churches also received sets of banners which are being well used. I haven't received as many photos as I had hoped for, but in talking with the pastors it's encouraging to hear their reports.

Despite being ranked as the 4th lowest in literacy, one thing we do is provide school children with Bibles, New Testaments, John and Romans booklets, along with other printed materials. Despite the illiteracy, we do this because it is the best way to get printed Christian materials into Muslim homes. Sierra Leone is an interesting anomaly in that older generations reads much better than the younger. Many missionaries to third-world countries meet the opposite scenario. Our older people were educated under the British school system while Sierra Leone was a British protectorate. The chaos created upon attaining their independence in 1961, followed by the 12 year civil war from 1991-2003 produced an education vacuum from which Sierra Leone is still struggling to overcome. The older Muslims in these homes will read our printed materials because it came from a school, whereas they won't take the same booklets during door-to-door visitation. Plus this gives the school children a means to practice their reading. It is a thrill to us to see the children leaving school with Christian Bibles and booklets headed to Muslim homes!

THE LATEST NEWS: We have purchased a used RV. The purpose for this is twofold. First, it will make traveling to Boston for Laura's doctors' appointments much easier on her. For our previous trip to Mass General, we flew, and even went the extra expense of first class to make it as comfortable as possible for Laura, it was still very draining on her and required two weeks of recovery. She suffered spasms (which look like seizures) both ways, plus the pressure was very hard on her head and spine. With the RV, we can take our time, she can move around to where she's most comfortable.

Second, and most exciting, is that after 16 years on the field, we will have our first furlough to report in with you, our faithful supporters! One purpose for visiting churches will be to recruit much needed help. We especially need a new full-time director for GTF Bible Mission. Being ranked among the 10 poorest countries certainly makes Sierra Leone a challenging field. But with the right man as director, and (prayerfully) other support workers, there is so much more which can be accomplished for the Lord in this needy country. We have laid the groundwork, now it's time to pass the baton to a new director.

My personal long-term desire is to continue working in Sierra Leone I am able, and as Laura can manage without me. The new director will need help learning the culture and my connections. I intend to provide that assistance for as long as I am able. We also do not believe the Lord is ready for me to be 100% off the field. But I do need to keep my first ministry, my wife, in her rightful place. Laura is completely in agreement with my continuing to make extended trips to Sierra Leone as funds and her health allow. We are really starting to see fruit from our 16 years of labor, and we wish to stay faithful to "be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die" (Revelation 3:2). At 80% of the population Islam is rapidly outpacing church growth. We feel the need to help our brethren to be prepared for the upcoming challenges of the ministry. This is why we work through established churches. The pastors know little Bible and are not equipped to effectively lead their congregations in the basics of Christian living. For the most part, these churches are ready to die.

Thank you for allowing us to be your voice in Sierra Leone. We are looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible, and will be sure to let you know when we are ready to start scheduling meetings. We pray for you as you remain faithful in each of your fields here on the home-front.

Because He is Worthy

Stephen & Laura Holt

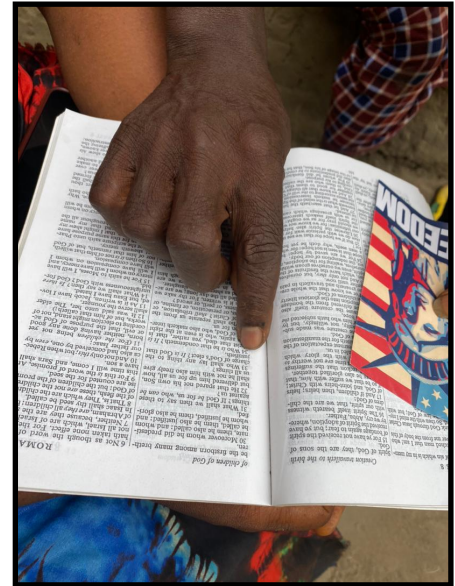
Be sure to scroll to photo pages below!



Getting BIBLES into Muslim Homes!



Holy Bible, book divine
Precious treasure, thou art mine!



The Bibles and other materials also
provide much needed reading practice.



John and Romans booklets with our own custom
Sierra Leone cover!



Teachers receive a variety of books written by
our pastor, James W. Knox, to help them
understand Bible truths. The majority of these
teachers will be Muslim.
We know they read them because we do receive
positive comments from them.



Illustrated Evangelism Hard at Work!



Left: This photo is especially exciting for Laura. The woman speaking is the pastor's wife training new evangelism workers in how to use The Advocate banners and booklets. It is thrilling to see women who cannot read present the Gospel using pictures. They learn the basic story line along with scripture memorization. They are especially useful with other women who are often intimidated by the men and don't engage well with them.

It has long been a dream of Laura's to get illiterate women involved in the evangelism as they are often left out of such activities. This dream is becoming a reality!



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Above: Pastor Senesi utilizing the banners for some evening open-air preaching to a gathering crowd. Children are always attracted by the colorful banners.

Church Growth!



Left: Thanks to your gracious provision, this church is able to give a new Bible to every first-time visitor!

BAPTISMS!

It is exciting to see our Partner Churches growing and humbling to have had a part in that growth. Let's hope there's no crocodiles nearby!

