



# Gather The Fragments Bible Mission

## *Stephen & Laura Holt*

### *Sierra Leone, West Africa*

## FIELD REPORT: MARCH 2014

Dear praying family and friends

Greetings to you all. A lot is happening and we're excited to bring this report to you. Wednesday February 4<sup>th</sup>, classes resumed at our Baomahun Bible institute. We're in the home stretch to graduate our first crew and everyone is working hard toward that mid-June goal. Sunday afternoon classes in Gumahun started the following week. The resulting overlap with dry season evangelism combined with work projects around the mission compound which can only be done during this season makes for a very hectic schedule. But we're all in good health and would certainly rather be busy than idle. Aimee is a trooper and is game for any adventure we toss her way.

### ★ FEATURE STORY: THE GIMA EVANGELISM CIRCUIT ★

On January 10 Aimee and I began a two-day reconnaissance mission to assess the feasibility of evangelism in a circuit of remote villages about 10 miles off the road. A few weeks earlier an advance team comprised of some of our Tendabu students returned with a report of good receptivity and desire of the people to have us visit. According to the collective memory of the villages, it has been several generations since the Gospel message was presented and in some villages no one present had ever heard the "old, old story" even among the very elderly. For generations, Islam has made advances in these isolated areas and so the majority of people are "folk Muslims" combining traditional animistic beliefs with a nominal adherence to the tenants of Islam. Any church influence is Catholic. David Johnny gave a stirring report from one village. With the whole village assembled to hear the preaching of the Gospel, a very elderly Muslim man stood and addressed the gathering. "If this were an Imam [Muslim equivalent of a pastor] he would be *demanding* a goat, some oil, and rice. These men have come, given their time, and asked for nothing. We need to listen to them." Among the gathering that morning was Simeon, a former student of mine who lives in another area but was visiting that village. Holding up his Bible Simeon then stood saying, "The man who sent these men and provided the literature they have brought is the same man who freely gave me this Bible. I encourage you to receive him." What an amazing testimony that this man from another area should "happen" to be there on that very day to back up the words of David and his team! This took place in the village of Gima which is close to the main road and became our launching point to access 10 villages. On the strength of this report we began to assemble our team and make our schedule.

We were able to drive to seven of the ten villages using a road which was little more than a goat trail (see photo pages). At each stop the village chief ordered his people to leave their work and come listen to the "strangers" who had come to give them God's word. Though all the chiefs were Muslim they were eager to have us speak to their people. The people were quiet and attentive with each session lasting an hour or more. We also had several productive question and answer sessions. In many cases, word having spread that white visitors had come to preach the Gospel, smaller villages behind the one we were visiting also attended.

While in Njailahun (no clue how to say it), the home village of one of our team members, we were walking through a particularly dark and densely forested area. I, being the typical bungling American, was talking and admiring the trees not paying any particular attention to stay on the path. I then realized that everyone else was very quiet and looking at me as if to say, "Just WHAT are you doing?" Only after I had made my blunders did they think to tell me that we were in the "sacred forest". On the right was the men's side where no women are allowed; the left is the women's side where men are

excluded. So I learned a lesson and lived to tell about it. No spears, no boiling pot in which to stew the clueless white missionary.

We left the vehicle at Kpakingubu (pronounce how you like) and set out on foot for Foya where we were scheduled to overnight. While walking to Foya a pair of young girls came out of the forest onto the path. They had been fishing and were taking their catch home for dinner. They were clearly afraid of the whites and kept a safe distance, eyes wide with suspicion and wariness. So I decided they needed some help getting to know me. I turned toward them, raised my arms over my head and growled like a grizzly bear! Those poor girls went from afraid to terrified, dropped their fish and ran back into the forest. I'm not sure why they didn't warm up to me when we arrived in Foya.

In the Mende language "Foya" means sun and the village is so named because it's at the top of the hills and sees the sun first in the morning. It was a steep three-mile trek and we arrived in Foya around 6 in the evening. We were very well received, given generous accommodations and fed way too much food. Not knowing what to expect we had packed in some canned goods but we never needed them and packed them all out again. After a bit of a "bird bath" we sat outside singing hymns. The people then wanted to show us their church building where they treated us to traditional music. We went to bed tired. The next morning we split into two teams to present the wordless evangelism book at two different points in Foya. From there these teams each went to a different village beyond Foya. These two villages, Talia where I went, and Mano where Aimee went, had no record of white people having ever visited. People just thronged around us silently staring. And incredibly there was also no memory of God's word having ever been preached in the villages. This was new territory for the Gospel! The teams arrived back in Foya around two in the afternoon and after another over-generous meal, we gathered our belongings into our packs and set out for our return to Kpakingubu and the drive home.

### ❧ A Report from Aimee Tanselle ❧

What a privilege to be able to go the villages of Gima, Foya, Mano and the various other little villages that are tucked away off the main road. The kids in these villages were more distant because of less exposure to white people and some were downright terrified of the white man, but others would gather around to hear the white girl stumble over a few Mende words, or just quietly sit and watch her. Most of the kids understood my attempts at Krio, but were more impressed when I showed off my knowledge of Mende. This consisted of the standard greeting and counting to ten. At one point, I had some girls sitting with me and I counted from one to ten and then said "Mende done-done!" For the rest of the time I was in Foya whenever those girls saw me they would count to ten in Mende and then say, "Mende done-done" after which they would begin laughing. Of course, it didn't end there. They had friends, so they had to repeat to their friends the poor white girl's attempt at Mende! During down time in Foya, there was always a mob of kids hanging around. Unlike the kids in Baomahun, they were more distant and much quieter. There was a bit of a language barrier with some of them but a perfect icebreaker is the camera. It's amazing what a thrill these kids got out of having their picture taken, or seeing someone else being "snapped." Kids, they may talk differently, but they are the same anywhere you go!

One thing that really made an impression on me in these villages was seeing the people gather to listen to the Gospel. Young and old, men and women, chiefs and imams all would leave their work, meet you on the path and return with you to hear what you had to say. At one village there were some women and children who were pounding rice which were quite willing to pose for the camera, laughing the whole time. They got a bigger laugh when I attempted to "help" pound the rice! Yet all of them left what they were doing to come and listen intently to the Gospel. They had other things they could have been doing, but they chose to come and listen. And there was no hurry; they would have remained and listened as long as we were willing to talk. Praise God for something worth talking about!



This was a very productive reconnaissance trip. Having assessed the road, I believe that with a light load we can drive all the way to Foya making that a bivouac camp and branching out from there. But Foya is definitely the end of anything resembling a road! Laura has just finished the artwork for a new wordless evangelism book which uses the story of Noah to teach the Gospel. We will put it through its sea trail at Foya in April along with a return trip to the urban setting of Lunsar (see January 2014 Report). It was exciting for me to see the Bible institute students in action. They've learned a lot and are becoming an effective evangelism force to be reckoned with. Something very notably absent in these isolated villages is any Pentecostal influence. That cult prefers areas where the offerings and collections are larger than these villages would afford. It was very refreshing to not have to deal with the foolishness they preach. Here we were primarily

dealing with the effects of generations of spiritual darkness but is uncluttered by false Bible teaching. This trip also underscores the vast amount of work which still needs to be accomplished. Please pray with us as the Gospel of Jesus Christ continues to advance in these unreached areas; places which might be forgotten by man but are not forgotten by man's Creator.

★ **NEWS & NOTES** ★

**NEW MINISTRIES:** Two new ministries have opened up as a direct result of our students being about the Lord's work in town. First, a few weeks ago Moses Menjor came to me requesting assistance with a group of prostitutes who were asking him questions. Due to the disproportionate number of men in town for freelance gold mining work, we also have a very large number of harlots. These miners are not associated with the British mining company but rather work in horrendous conditions of mining pits using very primitive methods. Moses is known around town as one of the Bible institute students and because of his active evangelism these ladies cried out to him one day in complete anguish of soul, wanting to know how to change their miserable lives. They were too ashamed and embarrassed to attend church knowing how others would look upon them. Aimee, Laura, and Moses then began making regular visits to this group of women. After a couple of visits one woman, Miriam, stated that through the week she had meditated on the things discussed in the first session and had made the choice to place all her faith in Jesus Christ to be her Savior! She said she'd like to come to church and she indeed did so the following Sunday. She also brought her young sister, Howa, who attended Children's Church which Aimee teaches. What a thrill to influence this young heart that she may be spared following the life of her sister. This work is just beginning and Aimee and Laura need your prayers as they try to counsel these women. We'll keep you updated as things develop.

The second new ministry is at the police barracks in town. Our Bible institute students were invited by the Commanding Officer at the police post to come on a weekly basis and provide Bible study to his men. I have accompanied them for the first two sessions but told them that this is their work; the fruition of why they study and attend classes. The Bible institute is getting a good reputation. I was recently told by several of the town leaders that they see a difference in our students and they like it; these men are all Muslim. All Glory to God for His marvelous working.

**MORE CEF CLASSES:** Thanks to your prayers, Aimee has been afforded two classes at the community primary school in town. On Wednesday mornings she will teach one hour each in grades 5 and 6 with a total of about 65 children.

**BUILDING PROJECTS:** With the popularity of our fresh eggs has come the need to build a larger poultry house. We're now putting the finishing touches on the new facility which will be capable of housing 200 laying hens though we're starting with 100. This has scored us points with town leadership which in recent months has become much more friendly. Alfred serves as our distributor giving him steady income and we're glad we can help his family in this way. Additionally, we're nearing completion of a guest bungalow; two rooms, a shared kitchen/bath area and a beautiful veranda which is the "happening" room in African culture. The building currently utilized by Aimee will be converted into my much-needed office. We will also relocate the tape duplicating equipment, book binder and laminator to the office building rather than having them tucked into various corners of the house. The new guest housing facility will be more suitable for that function.

We have four pages of photos highlighting our Gima trip. Please visit our website at [gatherthefragments.com](http://gatherthefragments.com) to view them on the Field Report page. As always, we remain grateful for your prayer and financial support. Because of you we can be here. You have much fruit to your account!

*Because He is Worthy*

*Stephen and Laura Holt*



# OPERATION: DRY SEASON EVANGELISM

## THE GIMA CIRCUIT



Evangelism in remote and isolated villages. Taking the road less traveled makes for exciting adventure.

We drove as far as we could and from there we set out on foot.

At each village the chief ordered everyone to assemble and listen to the "strangers" give the Gospel.

The wordless evangelism book was used to good effect augmenting the preaching.





# THE GIMA CIRCUIT



*For we walk by faith not by sight (II Corinthians 5:7)*



*But getting  
there is half  
of the fun!*



*During our two days we  
preached the Gospel in ten  
villages.*

*There are many more waiting  
to hear the Good News of  
Jesus Christ for the first time.*



*“I see the smoke of a thousand villages  
where no missionary has been” - David Livingstone*



# THE GIMA CIRCUIT

*The face of those who have never heard*





# THE GIMA CIRCUIT

*What do people in these remote places do for a living?*



*This elderly man is making wooden cooking paddles.*



*The woman above makes fishing nets.*

*These items will be transported for sale in Bo and other urban areas. Other people weave grass mats or make brooms. Most people farm as well.*

*The little ones enjoy their simple way of life and were happy to have visitors.*



## BACK TO REALITY

*At Kpakigubu vehicle problems awaited us along with plenty of people who wanted to help.*

*Fortunately it was a simple repair and we made it home just fine.*

