



Gather The Fragments Bible Mission

Stephen & Laura Holt

Sierra Leone, West Africa

FIELD REPORT: JULY 2015

Dear Praying Family and Friends

We apologize for the delay in getting this new Field Report out to you. It's now the rainy season in Sierra Leone when communications are always more difficult.

In April and May we sent updates with the news that institute classes had resumed and were well attended. Unfortunately this did last very long. As the demands of the new planting season increased attendance fell off and at one location classes were cancelled altogether. At the institute in our home village, Stephen was able to revise the lessons and shorten the class duration so the men would be available to work their farms. With the near collapse of the economy, families are turning to agriculture like we've never seen. Acres and acres of land have been cleared and planted as families struggle to survive. For GTF Bible Institute, all of this means students aren't available and classes are once again being put on hold.

One new development which is particularly exciting is the increased requests from area primary schools to have our graduates teach Religious and Moral Education (RME) class. This is a required portion of the government curriculum and Stephen is getting requests for assistance! School budgets are extremely tight and it's well known that we don't charge to supply teachers for RME classes. For these classes we use a combination of Child Evangelism Fellowship materials and large-scale pastel drawings to teach basic Bible stories. Currently there is a rotation of institute graduates teaching a one hour class per week at three schools and Stephen accompanies them as he's able. Because these schools are in rural areas, they are the only option for families and many of the students are Muslim. We rejoice to have such an open door to these young hearts. There are many more such calls but we're unable to fill all the requests at this time.

Another development is in the continuing expansion of the circuit of Partnering Churches. I'll quote from Stephen's email. "While traveling to Bo with Dennis and Moses we were stopped by a pastor whom I don't really know but I do know his town chief. He wanted to talk to me and asked me to come preach at his church. He said his people would really appreciate it and that it would be an encouragement to them. As we talked I asked him if preaching in English would be acceptable. He said yes and that he would just interpret for me. I told him that really doesn't work well and a lot gets lost in translation. Then I said to him, 'Look at these two men. They are

two of my graduates. Let one of them preach for you and I'll come to assist.' He was thrilled and quickly agreed that this would work much better. As we left, I told Dennis and Moses that this is the direction I had been praying we could soon start taking. They need to hear it in their own language and from their own people. This could be our next big step in growth. I was thrilled to see the opportunity open up as we spoke and what a blessing it was for Moses to be so unhesitant in volunteering. GLORY!"

Revelation 3:2 says "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die..." The purpose of the circuit of Partnering Churches is to strengthen the churches that remain. With increasing social persecution from the Muslim majority, many Christians are discouraged and losing heart, while many churches are ready to die. This next story is an excellent example of the type of social persecution we regularly see and is increasing. This is how the religion of peace operates. I will again use Stephen's words.

"Mary [one of our church members] is a dreadfully sad case. Her husband died several months ago. Her older brother then contacted her stating that since it was illegal under Islamic law for her to be living alone (because she might fornicate) he had arranged a marriage to a Muslim man. Protesting that the man was Muslim and that she had taken Jesus Christ as her savior and desired to live as a Christian, Mary refused to submit to her brother's arrangement. She further stated that marriage was an issue of the heart and that she had no love for this man. The family then intensified the pressure on Mary saying that they would abandon her and that she would be completely on her own if she were to get into any trouble or experience any problems. You know how culturally vulnerable women are and that widows have no voice. The family then got Chief Kawa involved [our town chief who himself is Muslim]. Initially, Chief Kawa told the family that Mary now attends a Bible church and it won't do any good; she'll never return to Islam from that. But Muslim pressure and money won out and Chief Kawa, siding with the brother, in the end forced Mary into this marriage. She is now required to attend Mosque. She hadn't been in church for a few weeks so Moses and I went to visit her; this is when we learned what had happened. She was so heartbroken telling us the story that she wouldn't even look up; she kept her eyes cast downward clearly hurt by the circumstances over which she has no control. Our main concern was to assure her of her eternal security. Mary was afraid that she would lose her salvation by being forced to attend Mosque. She was greatly encouraged to learn that no man could pluck her out of the Savior's hand. I told her she could call me or any of the church men anytime she needed prayer or wanted Bible study. The very amazing thing is that her new husband doesn't even live in Baomahun; he's in Lungi [6 hours away]. He doesn't want to take Mary there because he knows it will upset the delicate balance with his other wives. He's recruited some people in town to monitor Mary and assure that she's in attendance at Mosque. But there's no fear for her soul; she's saved and isn't afraid to say so! We'll be visiting her as we can to encourage her."

This type of forced marriage is becoming more common especially in the rural areas. Christian fathers are experiencing severe pressure from Muslim men to force their daughters into Islamic marriages. The Christian families might be boycotted at the market or in other business areas or they might be culturally abused and mistreated until they give in to the pressure. Thus the war of attrition is being stepped up by the Muslim majority. Sadly, sound Bible doctrine has not been taught in Sierra Leone in many decades and has been replaced by Mormon, Jehovah Witness,

Seventh-Day Adventist, and Pentecostal heresy so people who truly are saved have no understanding of eternal security and other basic doctrines. As our circuit expands and people learn the truth, they respond by desiring to be eager witnesses to their countrymen. Every Partnering Church receives training in two areas: basic Bible doctrines and evangelism. Word of mouth is the main mode by which our training circuit continues to expand.

EBOLA AND POLITICAL NEWS: As of this writing, Liberia reported six new cases of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD). This came after nearly two months of being declared “clean” by the WHO and the source of the recurrence is still undetermined. There continues to be an average of 30 new cases per week in Guinea and Sierra Leone, an infection rate which the UN says is “significant” stating that, “Under normal circumstances, that rate of infection would be considered a major outbreak according to WHO standards.” There are several areas in Sierra Leone under indefinite quarantine and the general state of emergency has not been rescinded.

President Koroma has won his bid to extend his term of office citing the need to conduct the national census which was postponed due to the EVD crisis. Initially postponed for one year, the date for the general election is now pushed out even further and remains undetermined. Political rumblings and grumblings continue and there is widespread distrust of the Koroma leadership. Most of this is kept quiet at present but when Stephen travels he questions people to get informal opinions which reveal the growing distrust and helps him stay informed at the street level. There is also increasing violent crime and armed robberies as the poor steal from the poor.

STATESIDE NEWS: As August approaches, I will soon pass the one-year mark of my return to the States. For the most part it has gone quickly as my time has been filled with writing, teaching, traveling, and enjoying time with our families. In June I attended a tropical gardening seminar at the ECHO farm in North Fort Meyers, FL. This was time well spent and I’ve learned a lot of things specific to the difficulties of gardening in the tropics which I’m eager to implement. In addition to my full travel schedule, I’m also working on shipping a large crate of supplies to Sierra Leone. This is coming together nicely and I expect to be able to send it early in September. For anyone needing contact information to ship mission supplies, I highly recommend Missionary Expeditors (www.missionaryexpeditors.com) They are a pleasure to work with, very professional, and quite reasonable in their rates. Plus they have good contacts for all that’s needed to ship crates or containers.

We are grateful for your continued support, both prayer and financial, of Gather The Fragments Bible Mission. Stephen sends his heartfelt greetings to all of you. You remain in our prayers as you faithfully serve our Lord Jesus.

Because He is Worthy

Stephen & Laura Holt

See photo pages below

Home-Town Evangelism



Members of The Bible Mission Church have caught the vision for evangelism not only in our village of Baomahun but also in smaller outlying villages.

Please note that there are two women among these Ambassadors for Christ. This is a big step for our ladies and we rejoice in their growth!



Village Primary Schools



Circuit Preaching

Using pastel illustrations to demonstrate the two crowns of Jesus
The Crown of Mercy (thorns) and
The Crown of Judgment





The man in the blue shirt at right is the Muslim headmaster of this village primary school. After hearing the Bible teaching for several weeks, he has been spending time with Stephen asking sincere questions.

Please pray as these children and teachers to respond to light of the truth.



Our dear broken hearted Mary as she related her tragic story to Moses and Stephen



Standing next to the Sierra Leone flag at a missions conference, Ridge Road Baptist Church Brewton, Alabama