



# Gather The Fragments Bible Mission

## *Stephen & Laura Holt*

### *Sierra Leone, West Africa*

## FIELD REPORT: MARCH 2019

### Greetings to our Family and Friends!

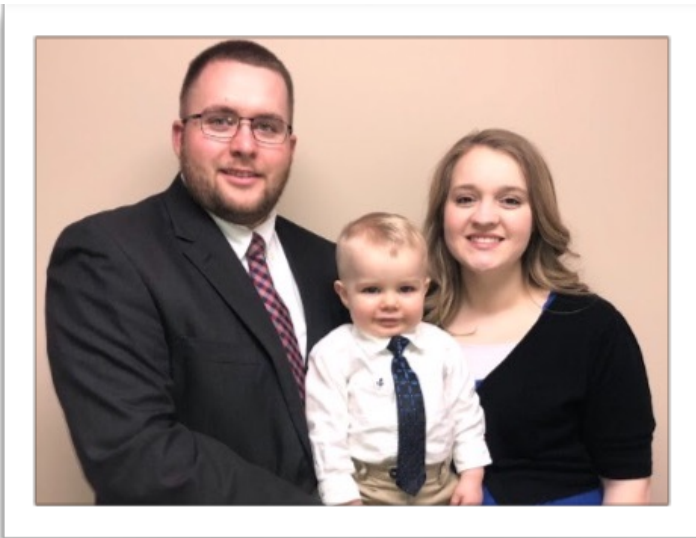
This new year has brought an abundance activity at GTF Bible Mission and our Field Report is packed with lots of great news and photos.

**BUILDING PROJECT UPDATE:** We are bearing down on the completion of the foundation phase for our new church building which is excellent since the rainy season will soon be bearing down on us! This will bring all work to a halt until at least November. The building project has served to pull our people together as they work to build *their* church. It's a blessing to my heart to see men who have been shoveling all day in the mining pits walk back to town, dirty and tired, and then put in two or three more hours of work ... *shoveling* as we take load after load of dirt to backfill the floor of the building.

It's very difficult to give you the scope of this project. Try to imagine: No dump trucks are available to transport the fill — my little trailer and very tired Land Cruiser do that work. No backhoe to fill the trailer — our men handle that job. No cement mixer to deliver cement — that is prepared by hand one bag at a time using water which is hauled from the well one bucket at a time. No ... (fill in the blank). But the people have a mind to work and it's steadily getting done. The only work we've hired out are two masons to do the block work. I anticipate that we'll put the final cement blocks into place closing up the foundation by the end of this month. The push is on!

One need we have for the job is lots stone to add to the backfill. For this I've tapped into an elite Special Task Force with honed skills and talents. Baomahun has a large population of children (many of whom are orphans) who don't attend school and have little to do all day other than get into trouble. They like to torment me by jumping into the trailer as I drive through the village. I've been on them for years to not do that as they can get seriously hurt (we've had one serious injury and some smaller ones). They crowd me as I'm trying to maneuver and I can't see them. I'm afraid I'll run over one of the little ones someday. I decided to allow them to earn a ride on the trailer by helping me load stone during the day when the men are working and not available. They're very self policing. Those who are actually doing the work aren't about to allow any slackers get a ride as they go bouncing and laughing through town. It's the closest thing to an amusement ride we have and they eagerly show up each day to assist with this necessary task. They still torment me but we have a good time and somehow the work gets done!

## **SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT**



**Gather The Fragments Bible Mission is very pleased to welcome the Mustard family as full-time laborers together with us!**

Stephen, Rebekah, Laban, and baby girl in April

**REINFORCEMENTS NOW APPEARING:** Laura and I thank you for your many years of faithful prayer for the work in Sierra Leone. And now, we are pleased to report to you that the prayer for much needed help has been answered! Brother Stephen Mustard, who recently spent three weeks with me laying out the foundation for the GTF building project, has formally announced that he and his family have surrendered to serve full time on the field along side of us. During our time working together, I was able to observe that Bro. Mustard possesses many strengths and skills, along with the necessary compassion and a true heart for service which will serve him and his family well in a remote village setting. Brother Mustard was with GTF in the capacity of project manager for the foundation phase of our building project. Yet he did not limit himself to that “job description,” willingly participating in all aspects of service with enthusiasm and zeal.

We've been discussing this possibility with the Mustards for nearly a year and Stephen's time in Sierra Leone also served as a survey trip to assess of the feasibility of raising a young family in our remote community. After much prayer along with counsel from his pastor, Bro. Mustard announced this decision to their church family on March 10. The Mustard family is now officially on deputation, has several meetings booked already, and is quickly moving forward with the goal of being on the field by the summer of 2020. Rebekah is due in mid-April with their second child so please hold them in prayer for a safe and healthy delivery.

A particular strength I see in Bro. Mustard is his love for Sierra Leone's children. By joining GTF and working with this needy segment of the population, Bro. Mustard and his wife will greatly expand the scope of the GTF ministry. It is my pleasure to strongly recommend the Stephen Mustard family for service with Gather The Fragments Bible Mission in Sierra Leone. He is currently booking meetings and may be reached at 276-389-8601.

**FROM BRO. MUSTARD:** “During my three week stay with Brother Holt, early one morning, as I listened to the loud speaker from the mosque in the small village of Baomahun, the Lord reminded me of I Corinthians 15:34 ‘... for some have not the knowledge of God, I speak this to your shame.’ My call to Sierra Leone was confirmed in that moment.”

**JOINING AND PRAISE:** We praise the Lord for being joined in labor by the Mustard family. But we also have another joining and cause for more praise. During our first 10 years in Sierra Leone we were faithfully served and protected by our security dogs, Goodness and Mercy. When I had to leave for the States in December 2018 to help Laura with her health needs, I made the hard decision to put them down. We believe Mercy had cancer and he was quite ill. And it would have been very difficult for Goodness to be without his brother as they had never been separated. Additionally there was simply no one to provide long-term care for these loyal protectors.

As GTF moves into a new phase of ministry we welcome two new, much needed, security pups. This is a very good time to dedicate the time for training them as I'll be engaged in institute teaching and won't be traveling the circuit again until the Mustards arrive. And this will get the dogs past their puppy stage before there's a lot of other changes at the mission compound. Laura was given the task of naming the pups and decided on something significant to the ministry. She said that in our first 10 years we continually saw God's Goodness and Mercy. Now, as things change, we are being joined, Levi; and for that we give praise, Judah (Genesis 29:34-35). I think she did just fine in her selection.

To underscore this need, we recently had a man attempt to jump our security fencing while I was out of town. Two of our compound workers saw him and tackled him. They were quickly aided by some church members who severely beat the offender. A cultural lesson: In Sierra Leone this is called "bush justice" and is perfectly legal as long as no blood is drawn. To top it off, the man was then taken to our local holding cell to await his fate. The next day I allowed him to go with the strict warning that if I ever saw him near the compound again it wouldn't go so well. With the recent influx of new miners, and other new residents moving into town this is going to continue to be a problem. For any of you who are wondering, Levi is the black pup and Judah is brown. Laura also has the task of tutoring me long-distance in their training as she is the one who normally handles this job.



**LOOKING AHEAD:** To help you have an overview of what's ahead, Laura and I put together a rough time line of up coming events. Fall of 2019: Ship metal building as well as Mustards' household goods. Bro. Mustard is coordinating this task. Once it arrives here, the building parts can just sit and wait until the time appointed. Summer 2020: Mustard family arrival to Sierra Leone. Winter of 2020/2021: Erect church building. A team of six men from two Stateside churches will also be on site to assist with this monumental task. It's not too early to begin to pray that all of these elements pull together smoothly. The building itself is fully paid for, which includes Stateside shipping to our chosen port of departure. The only costs remaining are windows, doors, and ocean freight shipping. It also needs to be stated that the work represented here is only for the shell of the building. Floating the cement floor is going to be a massive undertaking and I haven't quite got those logistics figured out yet. But for now, we can maintain the building with a packed dirt floor and cement pad just inside the entryway.

Together with you the Lord has allowed us 10 very busy and productive years in Sierra Leone. We cannot thank you enough for your faithful prayer and giving which allow us to be your voice in West Africa.

Because He is Worthy

**Stephen & Laura Holt**

**See photo pages below**



# Back-hoe, Dump-truck, Cement-mixer!

## **WE-HAUL DO IT ALL!!**

I have no clue how many loads my little trailer has hauled! After shoveling all day in the mining pits, our men faithfully put in more time shoveling to transport fill to the site. We use two teams, one to load, the other to off load. The fill is easily accessible on the side of the road. The piles are created by the waste material from the very mining pits where these men work! Below is the cement mixing crew. All the water must be hauled in the yellow containers from nearby wells.





# The Hooligan Special Task Force



Not all of my crew are orphans but Baomahun does have many. Orphan or not, each child is craving affection, attention, and direction. Trying to harness their energy is a special task in itself but they've been very dedicated to the work. We certainly are a motley crew.



Because they're untrained, these children can be very frustrating. But this has turned into an unexpected blessing and we've gotten a lot accomplished just by channeling childhood zeal.

Somehow no one has gotten clobbered by all the flying rocks!





# The BIBLE Mission Church



At left: Our site on January 19 as we began layout for the foundation.

Below: This is the site as of March 19!

The progress is astounding considering all of the obstacles. Here you can see the only portion of the foundation remaining to be closed after all the fill is packed in.

