



Gather The Fragments Bible Mission

Stephen & Laura Holt

Sierra Leone, West Africa

FIELD REPORT: AUGUST 2019

Greetings to our Family and Friends!

FUN FACT: Sierra Leone is the wettest country in Africa and the third wettest country in the world! This monsoon season leaves no doubt about this fact and we still have until December when the rains officially end. As I write this letter, I'm stranded in our village of Baomahun as there is no way in or out for anything larger than a motorbike. The road headed south toward Bo, where we do the majority of our business, is completely washed out in three major areas along with several smaller mud traps. Many have fallen victim to this treacherously slick and thick mud with some rollovers and others sunk up to the axels. Four-wheel-drive is no match for this mess! The road to the north going out through Yele to Magburaka and Makeni had a bridge wash out which cuts us off from Lion Heart Hospital. A by-pass has been cut through the bush connecting to another road but, again, it's only accessible by motorbike. Our village, along with all the others on our road, are experiencing a depletion of supplies and fuel making for steep price increases on the minimal supplies coming in via motorbike but with the hazardous conditions, even the bikes are being cautious and not bringing in full loads. Fun times! Actually, I'm enjoying the isolation and I've gotten most of my class preparation finished with reduced interruptions. We'll be starting our class on How to Read and Study the Bible in a couple of weeks. The teaching in Bo will be delayed until the road is reliably safe to travel. I don't want to end up like the Land Cruiser shown on the photo page!

AMBULANCE RUN: On July 28 I was informed of a little girl, Rebecca Bangura, who had broken her leg while playing several days previously. She was examined by the assistant medical officer at the bush clinic in town who said she was unable to treat it and that the girl needed to be taken for X-rays at the Bo government hospital. The following day I transported Rebecca and her mother, Fatmatah. X-rays did indeed show fractures, but there were also very dark shadows showing inside the entire length of the bones. The bones would not support her weight, and the doctor feared either cancer or some other bone deteriorating disease. After seeing two doctors that day we were referred to an orthopedic surgeon at a private hospital in Freetown. Long story short, after ten days in the hospital with tests, two surgeries, and high doses of antibiotics, it was concluded that Rebecca has tuberculosis of the bones which is causing the infections inside the bones as well as large draining abscesses on the surface. This involves both her leg and arm and she's in considerable pain. As of August 19 she was discharged from the hospital and traveled back to Bo with her mother via transport vehicle. Our institute grad Moses Gbla is now living on the peninsula and was able to go to the hospital to assist Fatmatah in getting the correct vehicle. She has no experience outside of our small village so the big city of Freetown was extremely overwhelming to her. After overnighing in Bo they traveled home via motorbike. I can't imagine Rebecca's pain as they bounced along that road. Rebecca has a "back shell" plaster cast on her leg to protect and support the fractures while also allowing access for treatment of the abscess. She will continue to receive antibiotic regimen in our village clinic. Rebecca and Fatmatah attend The Bible Mission Church but after spending much time with them, I'm certain that Fatmatah is not saved. Rebecca's father has been absent from the family for a long time leaving Fatmatah to care for 5 children. Please pray for opportunity to speak further with Fatmatah and for the Lord to open her understanding. This is complicated by the fact that she largely only understands her Medingo

tribal language along with some Krio so I always need a translator with me when dealing with her. Special thanks to those who give to our “Native Medical Fund” which made possible this treatment for Rebecca; she is five years old.

AFRICAN ROADSIDE SERVICE: While in Freetown making hospital arrangements for Rebecca, our road washed out to the point where I could not get back into town. Normally I would have just gone home by the northern route and in through Yele but I also received word that the bridge had been swept away as the river overflowed the banks. It is not at all unusual for our rains to be so heavy and this is actually a normal year. After spending a couple of nights with fellow missionaries in Bo, Mojo and I decided to brave it and am so I glad we did. The road is now completely impassable and I would still be stranded in Bo. Making my way through one large mud field, I was doing alright but then ... we got stuck! Several men came along and working together were able to push us out. These young and strong entrepreneurs hang around the mud pits waiting for hapless souls like myself and are able to make a little money with their version of AAA!

CONTAINER PREPARATION: Laura is especially grateful for Brother Stephen Mustard’s diligent efforts in coordinating the packing of our shipping container as this means she doesn’t have to do it and with her health status that’s a tremendous blessing. Bro. Mustard recently received shipment of 4,300 New Testaments and over 10,000 Essence of Christianity (EOC) booklets. The EOC booklets utilize a custom cover which Laura designed; the same cover is also going on our John/Romans booklets which are due to ship any time now. This will give a nice unified and local look to our evangelism materials. Additionally, there’s a very large order of James W. Knox books arranged for delivery. These will be used at our Partnering Churches throughout the country for teaching, training, and edification of many congregations and we are really excited to be able to help them in this way.

SPECIAL PRAYER REQUEST: As GTF Bible Mission becomes established and settled, the need for more laborers is very evident. Laura and I are grateful for the Mustards committing their young lives to the service of the Lord along side us in Sierra Leone. We now ask that you please join us in prayer as we petition the Lord of the Harvest to send a second family to labor with the Mustard family. My personal ministry desire is to be more mobile and dedicated to the circuit of evangelism and training to strengthen existing churches. Having a second family to work with Stephen and Rebekah will greatly expand that which can be done in our Jerusalem and Judea as well as provide fellowship and support, something which Laura and I did not have so we can understand the benefit this will provide. Another advantage is the facilitating of needed rest times and furloughs as the families can trade off times away and as well as times of intensified of labor together. The physical compound is secure, the spiritual ground is broken, the mission reputation is well established, and we thank the Lord now for whom he will choose to send to help fill the ranks.

As stated above the rains will conclude in December. I’m already making plans for a fierce dry season circuit of training and evangelism. Laura’s new vinyl banners have arrived and I’m eager to put them through a serious stress test. This season will be my first major circuit effort since my return from the States so I’ll be concentrating on renewing friendships with existing Partner Churches. Many have called expressing desire to have training and evangelism campaigns. Please pray for this year’s circuit. Thank you for making it possible to give the gospel to the people of Sierra Leone. It is our privilege to be your voice in West Africa.

Because He is Worthy

Stephen & Laura Holt

See photo pages below

Rebecca Bangura



The day we took Rebecca to Bo for X-rays and her first evaluation she was in much pain and could not support any weight on her fractured leg.

She also has a smaller draining abscess on her elbow.



Glad to be home after 2 surgeries and 10 days in the hospital!

L: Reviewing the doctor's orders and the medications sent home with Fatmatah.

Please continue remember Rebecca and Fatmatah in your prayers as they have a long road of recovery ahead of them.

Caution: Road Work Ahead

This is but a tiny sample of the mayhem we've experienced this rainy season as our road is washed out in several places. This mud is especially slick and builds up on tires making it very difficult to control the vehicle. Passengers walk around these mud traps reboarding their vehicle on the other side.

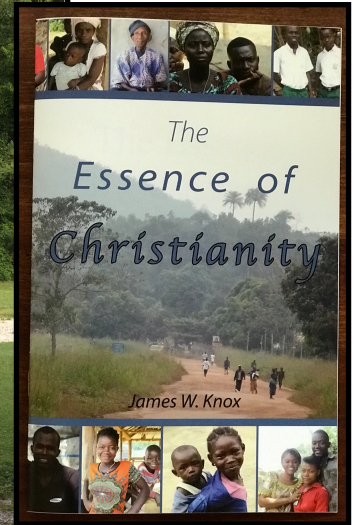
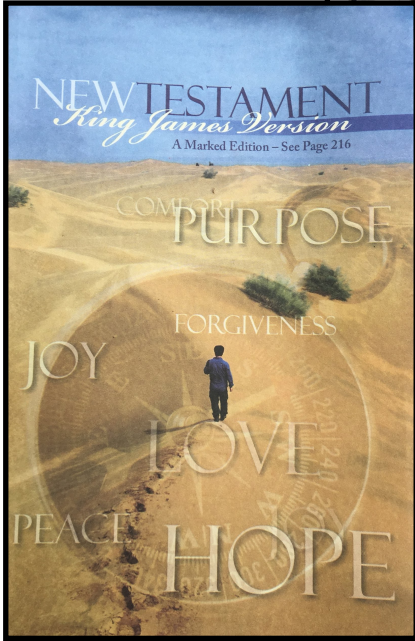


Illustrated Evangelism at Work!



Thanks to a break in the rain we were able to set up Laura's new vinyl banners in Simbek for their first use in public ministry where Moses preached to an attentive crowd.

Container Prep



4300 New Testaments and 10,000 Essence of Christianity have been delivered for the shipping container.

We're currently making arrangements for 60 Cases of J.W. Knox Books to be delivered.

Please continue to pray for the Mustard family as they travel to churches as well as coordinate the container. Laban is shown wearing a traditional African tunic while Evelyn is busy just being cute.

