



# Gather The Fragments Bible Mission

*Stephen & Laura Holt*  
*Sierra Leone, West Africa*

## FIELD REPORT: MAY 2021

*Greetings to our Family and Friends!*

The Circuit Season has been especially fulfilling this year. There are many positive changes and obvious indications of spiritual growth in our Partner Churches. As the season starts to wind down and the pace isn't quite so intense, it's easier for me to take stock of these definite advancements. This is extremely encouraging for me, and I am eager to share this growth with you.

**PARTNER CHURCHES:** All of our Partner Churches are indigenously organized, self-supporting, and self-governing. Some are part of the BCSL (Baptist Conference, Sierra Leone), some are Independent Baptist, others are non-denominational, while still others are of different denominations and cults, most commonly Seventh Day Adventist. I will preach and teach the truth anywhere I am invited, and we are generally asked to return. We have distributed books written by our pastor, James W. Knox, as well as Bibles, New Testaments, and other materials, to the leading men and women at each of these churches, which are always gratefully received. We have also distributed New Testaments in Schools. Thank you to our home church and others who have so generously supplied these much needed materials.

**GROWTH IN THE CHURCHES:** Over the years of developing and traveling our circuit of training and evangelism, I am consistently asked to help erect church buildings, put zinc on the roof of a church to replace thatch, purchase rice and other foodstuffs for the schools associated with some churches, pay teacher salaries at these church schools ... on it goes. Truly, the list is varied, lengthy, and sometimes quite creative. I confess that it can be wearisome as the barrage of requests continues from all sides.

Our one recurring request this year: "*Can you come back and help us with studying the Bible? We need to learn the Bible.*" Glory to God! I believe there is a palpable shift underway in the churches. In direct response to this new heartset, I am seeing a clear shift in the receptivity of people during our evangelism efforts. I fully believe that the state of the churches is directly reflected in the response to the gospel. We are really getting to where the Lord can bless our outreach efforts. Brethren, the prices for rice and other staple food items are higher than I've ever seen in GTF's 12 years on the field. It would be understandable for pastors and churches to be requesting financial help now, of all times. *This year they are not!*

Dear friends, as you pray with us and sacrificially give for us to remain on the front lines in Sierra Leone, this fruit is to your account. Thank you for giving to the Lord.

## **DRY SEASON RETROSPECTIVE PART 1**

In this report I will highlight our visits to Lokomassama, and Freetown. These are new churches and they too were requesting us to return for the sole purpose of Bible teaching.

**LOKOMASSAMA:** There is no church anywhere in this heavily populated, predominantly Muslim area, where a church from Waterloo, outside of Freetown, is attempting to plant a church. After prayer and fasting, they felt led to Lokomassama, trusting the Lord to guide to a specific village for the church plant. GTF was previously unknown to this group but we had been invited to join them by mutual friend and GTF Bible Institute graduate, Moses Gbla.

The Muslims were typically resistant to the Bible, however, unlike city Muslims, when confronted with problems in their religion regarding forgiveness of sin and redemption, they did not become enraged and break off the conversation. Rather, they asked questions! Laura's illustrated evangelism book, *The Advocate*, became a gateway to many productive visits. About a mile walk outside of the central market and main population area of Lokomassama proper, we spent several days in the village of Karma which is essentially 100% Muslim, with no Christian presence. There is no memory in their oral history of there ever being a church here. After being in the village and under the scrutiny of the chief, who is the leader of their



secret society as well as the head chief in the chieftdom, we were all stunned when this very powerful chief invited one of the men in the Waterloo group to return and hold a church service at their secondary school the following Sunday! This photo shows the thrilling turnout for the first meeting! This chief (who would not allow us to photograph him) has since contacted this group stating that if they will build a church, he will provide the

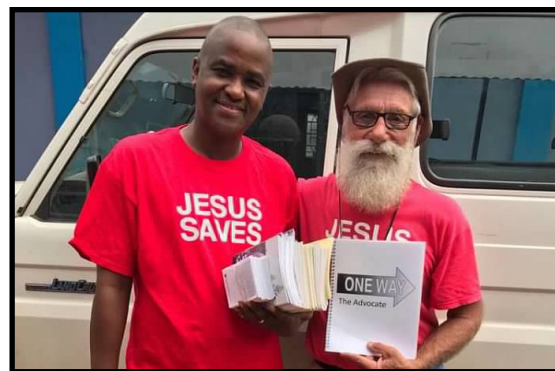
land while they continue to meet in the school. The chief has instructed his people to attend church stating, "If this church will make us more like these Christians, I want them to stay here." The man from the Waterloo group serving as pastor is continuing to evangelize with encouraging results! They have started this church on their own with no outside funds. They are reaching their own with no outside funds! GTF has only provided training, books, and evangelism materials, things they cannot get.

While in the village of Karma, we spent time at their schools where we were able to deal extensively with the teachers, who were all Mohammedan. As we spent much time with them, they wanted to know more, and had many challenging questions. On our last day in Karma, I gave each teacher a Sure Foundation book. They were so open to this book that I am certain they would embrace some extended teaching.

One of the things which greatly impressed the Muslim chief in Karma, was the observable testimony of the Christian men and women in our group. They were orderly, polite, respectful, helpful. Our men often relieved women from their work so they could give their attention to the gospel presentations. And we never asked for money. That is always a very striking difference, and does not go unnoticed. A Muslim Imam requires money to answer someone's questions or explain the Koran. Pentecostal groups beg money after coming into a village and spreading their lies and false doctrines. True Bible Christianity stands out!

**ON THE PENINSULA:** The main highlight from the peninsula isn't regarding the evangelism efforts but rather, my connection with a pentecostal preacher. During our stay in Lokomassama, several pastors from various churches joined us to gain experience with the evangelism books and banners. Our down time, after lunch, or in the evenings, was kept full and busy as we regularly had Bible studies with this assembled group of pastors. It is here that I met Brother Senasie (below) from Jui, outside of Freetown. He is planning to plant a church in Coos Bay, a horribly depressed, impoverished section of Freetown. Brother Senasie greatly benefited from the experience of evangelism training, but was especially helped by the Bible teaching. At the

end of our time in Lokomassama and Karma, Brother Senasie pleaded with me to fit in a visit to his church in Jui, the sooner the better. I told him my schedule was fairly full and really kind of put him off. I've had so many negative encounters in Freetown that I was in no hurry to book a week with another Pentecostal preacher who wasn't interested in learning the Bible, and was just hoping for some funding from the missionary. After getting back to the compound in Baomahun however, the Lord really dealt with my heart about this bother. I came to see that he sincerely wanted help learning the Bible. Due to an unexpected cancellation, I was able to give them four full days. God was beginning to move in a divine appointment between GTF and The Vine Church.



We had a great time evangelizing in several Freetown suburbs, but the high point was the Bible teaching. Upon our departure Brother Senasie, with tears in his eyes, told me, "This has been a divine meeting. I can't thank you enough. You don't know what you've done. I've had to rethink everything I've been taught." This last statement was directly commenting on his new understanding of the biblical doctrine regarding the eternal security of the believer. It was a blessing to be able to give this dear brother, his pastor, Brother Marcus Pratt, and other leading men, several commentaries to help keep them in their Bibles until we can get back for more teaching. Once off our road, travel to Freetown is entirely on paved roads so it's not a difficult drive even during the rains. It's entirely reasonable think that I can get back there fairly soon.

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**OTHER NEWS:** While in Lokomassama, I received a text message along with some photos from a Pastor Phillip in The Gambia, a few countries to our north. A mutual friend had passed along to him the electronic files of Laura's artwork for *The Advocate* so Brother Phillip could make evangelism books and banners. He also used them in his church as visual aids while teaching some concepts from the book of Romans such as justification, imputation, and sanctification. This was a big encouragement to Laura. She is still struggling with her health, making it difficult to regularly work on new projects right now. Pastor Phillip's news gave her a great boost!

One of the biggest developments from this season's circuit is not from a Partner Church but from our very own Bible Mission Church. Interest among church members to be part of the circuit team has really taken off! Up until this season, the only ones to travel with me have been institute graduates. We have always made it very clear that any member who gets some evangelism experience in Baomahun, is welcome to join us for the traveling team. I wanted them to understand that it wasn't just about going somewhere new, or the excitement of being part of the team. They needed to realize that if they aren't serving at home, they won't serve away from home. This year it has really clicked, with some of our longstanding members consistently joining us. We are especially thrilled to have two ladies as a regular part of our team. This has been a huge encouragement for women in our Partner Churches to become involved on their home ground. Plus it also brings a cultural benefit. Though it's not completely incorrect for men to deal with women, it is far more acceptable for women to engage women in evangelism. We are now tapping into this somewhat neglected segment of the population, while training church women to work with women, praise the Lord!

We know how much of a blessing it is for these churches to have the GTF teams bring training, materials, assistance, and encouragement. It is also a rich blessing to us as we help our brothers and sisters in Christ. We wish you all could go on a round or two of the Dry Season Circuit, and experience that thrill of adventuring for Jesus with us! We will continue to bring you highlights from this circuit season to give you a small taste of traveling, teaching, training, and serving GTF circuit-style! Thank you for making all of this possible.

Because He is Worthy

*Stephen and Laura Holt*

(Scroll down for photo pages)



# The Village of Karma

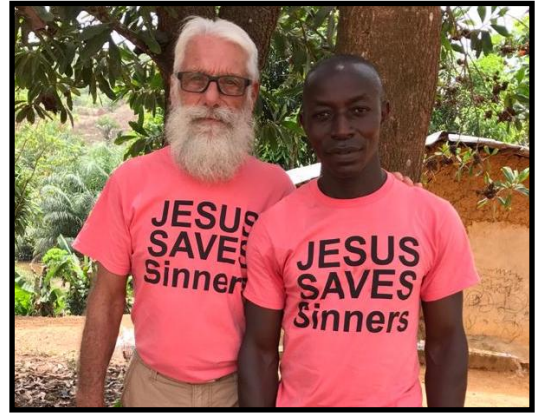
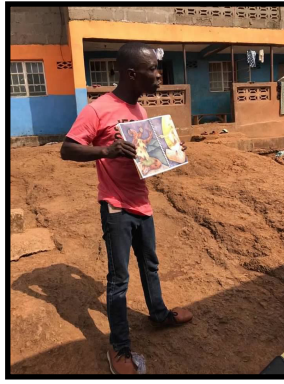


The short trek from Lokomassama proper to the village of Karma.





# On the Peninsula



Moses Gbla, the GTF Bible Institute graduate who introduced us to the group in Waterloo where he now lives. This group consists of several churches on the peninsula including The Vine in Jui where Brother Senasie attends.



Left: Moses Gbla's first time giving the gospel banner presentation. He did an excellent job! What a joy to see how he is growing and serving since moving away from Baomahun.

Below: In Wellington. The Freetown Peninsula is quite mountainous making for good exercise while on morning visitation!



Left: Preaching at the local well as people wait in line for their turn to fill their containers. This is a great place as they are not going to give up their place in line! We are happy to give them with a healthy dose of Living Water!

Below R: The church members in The Gambia who are using Laura's artwork.

