



Gather The Fragments Bible Mission

Stephen & Laura Holt

Sierra Leone, West Africa

FIELD REPORT: APRIL 2022

Greetings to our Family and Friends!

CHURCH UPDATE: I continue to be impressed with how well The Bible Mission Church is managing things in my absence. Pastor Alfred Menjor is continuing to work past some initial problems, and overall he is doing a very good job. In my regular communications with him and other church men, I can hear their growth. I have recently been informed that a Wednesday evening church service has been added. Praise the Lord!! This was entirely their own initiative, which is just the way I like things to be. I am careful to remind them that I am there as their mentor for counsel, teaching, and training, but it is their church. Their Wednesday meeting will be similar to what we see in the States for a mid-week church service: a Bible study followed by a time for prayer with plenty of congregational singing. I am told that it has been well attended which is encouraging news, given the big changes occurring at the mining company.

With the company hiring so many day laborers, there has been quite a change in the dynamics of the village. Many new church attendees have recently moved to Baomahun in the hopes of being hired. Unfortunately, once they are hired, we don't see them in church anymore. The work hours are demanding, and workers are typically expected to keep a Monday-Sunday work schedule, with some working the night shift, as the company ramps up to actual mining and processing of the gold. Another change we are seeing in the village is a return to what Laura coined as "the Wild West effect." Fighting, theft, drunkenness and drug use, prostitution, and general rabble rousing are all on the increase. With all of this comes increased opportunities for outreach as we maintain a very public church presence.

Even with all of these changes occurring, the regular members and core group remain faithful in church attendance and attendance of the new Wednesday evening meeting. This is greatly encouraging to Pastor Menjor and the leading men. I am also informed that the church is seeing a steady flow of upper-level administrative people from the company. As the company gets closer to the mining and processing phase, more of these managerial people will be permanently relocated to Baomahun, and will likely be in regular fellowship with us at church. This, of course, makes me all the more eager to be back in our adopted home.

HEALTH UPDATE: On March 31, I commenced my daily radiation treatments. This is currently scheduled to run about six more weeks. I am also receiving monthly hormone injections. It's uncertain how long they will run but if I could have my way about it, I wouldn't be receiving them at all. The side effects of these injections are very debilitating, especially at night, making it difficult to get any good sleep. I am also experiencing increased fatigue from the radiation, so with the combined effects of these treatments, I'm fairly run down. But praise the Lord that this seems to be the worst of it. The radiation treatment is daily, Monday through Friday, and every Wednesday I also meet with the oncologist. The plan is to do some bloodwork three months after the treatments conclude to determine the degree of success. Should the oncologist not be pleased with the outcome, we will run another, shorter course of hormone and radiation. I'm sure that I don't need to ask you how to pray!

CHURCH VISITS: We were very privileged to be able to attend a missions conference held by Grace Bible Church in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, Pastor Chris MacDonald. It perfectly worked out to accept this invitation for the

week before my radiation was scheduled to commence. Laura and I had such a wonderful time and were especially blessed by the preaching of long-time friend Brother Lee Cadenhead, missionary to Zimbabwe. We were also very blessed to have our oldest granddaughter, Ruth Thoma, attend with us. This small but growing church has an amazing heart for missions, and it was our honor to be with them for their ground-breaking, first-time missions conference.

Unfortunately, we regret that due to the daily schedule of my radiation treatments, we are unable to visit any other churches. Thank you for understanding that this is not a normal furlough for us. I am currently planning to make my return to Sierra Leone at the beginning September, directly after my cancer bloodwork checkup. My plan is to remain there for 18-24 months to get caught up on the many needs of the churches locally and on the training circuit. Laura and I will plan to do our first formal furlough in the 14 years we have been on the field the next time I return to the States. We are both very eager to be with as many of you as possible. We are eager to personally share with you the fruits of your investment.

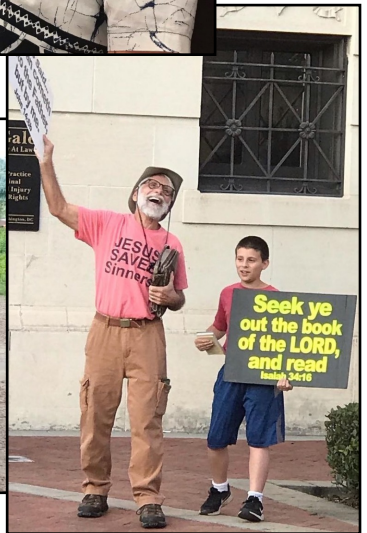
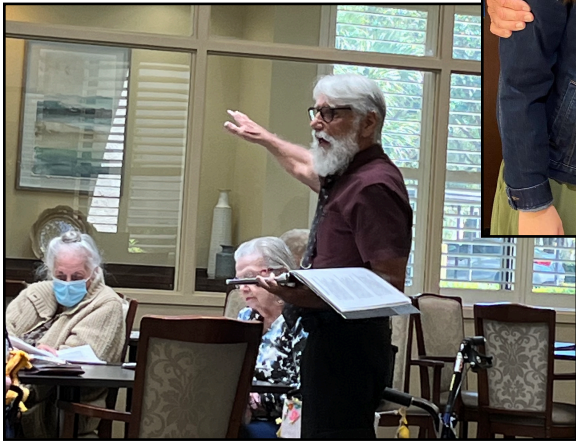
Thank you for the encouraging cards, emails, calls, and text messages, and above all, thank you for the prayers. We have been greatly encouraged by your care and concern for us. Thank you for remembering the churches in Sierra Leone in your prayers as well. It's hard to believe that I've been home nine months already, especially considering I was planning to be here 3-5 months max! We truly appreciate each of you, your faithful prayers as well as financial support.

Because He is Worthy Stephen & Laura Holt

Below: Nursing home ministry.

Far Left: Wearing African tunics at our annual Bible Conference in January.

Left: Mission Conference in SC with our granddaughter Ruth.



Left: Grandson Caleb learning some basic mechanics. It's been a blessing to have extra time with Caleb.

Top: Michael Conteh on Friday visitation in Baomahun.

Top Right: With Caleb, downtown DeLand for Friday street ministry.

