



Gather The Fragments Bible Mission

Stephen & Laura Holt

Sierra Leone, West Africa

Field Report: October 2023

Greetings to our Family and Friends!

In our last full report sent in June, I mentioned a man, John Congson, from the Philippines who would be spending a month with me as a survey trip for his family who has surrendered to full-time ministry in Sierra Leone, and would like to join an established missionary. Bro. Congson arrived at Lungi Airport on Saturday, September 16. After a day spent in Freetown so he could see the types of supermarkets in the city as well as available supplies, we made it back to Baomahun and the GTF compound the following Monday. By Wednesday, Bro. Congson was on his way back to Freetown, traveling by taxi from Bo with our adopted son, John. He was scheduled to spend a couple of days with another missionary on the peninsula who might have ministry opportunity for the Congson family. This was a beneficial meeting for Bro. John as it cleared up many questions he had, and he is prepared for his family to join the GTF team as soon as he's able to raise support in the Philippines.

JUMP START TO DRY SEASON CIRCUIT: On Sunday, September 24, Bro. Congson and I, along with two translation helpers, traveled several hours southwest to Moriba Town, located in another mining district. Working with a Pastor Ignatius Kajue and his congregation, we visited five schools, distributing John/Romans booklets. Teachers also received The Essence of Christianity and New Testament Survey, both written by our pastor, James W. Knox. We also gave the gospel banner presentation at each school, eliciting many good and thoughtful question/answer sessions. Pastor Kajue will be conducting follow up visits to the schools, as well as the villages surrounding each school in which we conducted evangelism utilizing the banners and booklets throughout the area. Three eager young men from the church regularly assist Bro. Ignatius, making a very effective evangelism team, working throughout this growing area. They will be conducting followup visits to people expressing interest in learning more about Jesus Christ and His salvation gift.

This is specifically why GTF works with established churches. First, it greatly facilitates follow up work so decisions for Christ do not have to be rushed. Second, it gives us a place to point the newly saved to for attendance in a New Testament local church. Additionally, it helps each church to grow, not just numerically, but also spiritually as the pastor and congregation go through our evangelism training and become actively involved in the gospel work. GTF equips such partner churches with scripture portions, gospel tracts, other literature, and Laura's pictorial evangelism booklets. On occasion we also supply the pastor with one full set of gospel banners. We love our network of partner churches and it is our privilege to train and equip them for the work of the gospel in their areas. It was important that Bro John Congson see and experience how GTF conducts our Dry Season Circuit. This is the reason that I chose to begin this year's circuit early. Bro. Congson, after observing for a couple of days, gave a good presentation to a small group utilizing The Advocate booklet. He worked well with the translator and he has an excellent grasp of the various scriptural concepts, as well as memorized scripture appropriate to the story.

The schools which Pastor Ignatius Kajue also arranged for us to visit, are operated by other churches in the area and so are specifically Christian schools. With so little employment throughout the country, families are moving into this active mining area in hopes of securing jobs. Many stay on, taking advantage of day work, waiting for their big break with one of these large foreign companies. Consequently, there has been somewhat of a swelling of the population, pushing the growth out into newly developing "suburb" areas. Although this population it is primarily Muslim, they are willing to send their children to these Christian schools as they are currently the only option available. Our main focus while in Moriba Town was evangelism in this expanding residential area.

Later in the week we spent a couple of days with Pastor Paul Nyanbe. As pastor of the newly formed Gesthemane Baptist Church, Bro Paul is evangelizing one of these newer growth areas. We assisted him with door-to-door visitation as well as preaching the gospel banner presentation at the village *barrie* — the public gathering area similar to a gazebo.

Another highlight from this week-long visit was an invitation to the area police post. The small staff was assembled and I presented a thirty-minute devotional message on integrity. The police in Sierra Leone have a deep and well-earned reputation for corruption and dishonesty. Despite hitting the Christian and Muslim officers squarely as I had hoped, it was well received, according to feedback I received later in the day. And I had fun too! The police post is directly across the street from Bro. Paul's church so follow up will be conveniently conducted.

MOVING FORWARD WITH THE CHURCH BUILDING: We are now entering the “transition season” as we move from the rainy season into the dry season, which is also building season. The rainy season has been very productive for me as a preparatory time, and I feel comfortable with our level of planning and prep work. Some of that work has been to modify the existing foundation which was initially erected to receive the metal building we had planned to utilize for The Bible Mission Church. Before I detail what we will accomplish moving forward, allow me a bit of review regarding this metal building.

The building we will be erecting as the church, on the already built foundation, will be block. But I assure you, we are not abandoning the use of the metal building shipped here in 2019, but rather we will redirect its use. You may recall that we had a team of builders coming from the States to work with Bro. Mustard and myself, all of whom have experience in erecting metal buildings. I have none. These men were scheduled to come in March 2020. Enter Covid-19, January 2020. We all well remember the world shutting down. Waiting for restrictions to lift, one by one, the members of the team (assembled by men from two churches), moved on to other things, some deploying to foreign mission fields. The parts and pieces for the building are securely stored in a dry, locked shipping container on our property. We are now planning to put this metal building on our compound property (the church building is on a separate piece of property across town) and utilize it for the GTF Bible Training Center. This will include two classrooms, a small dormitory for housing out of area students, along with necessary amenities.

Laura and I have long had a vision for being able to bring in the pastors and assistant pastors from our Partner Churches on the evangelism circuit, along with their wives should they desire, for one and two-week segments of Bible training. Being nearly the geographic center of the country, our village is well positioned to reach every quarter of our growing circuit ministry. Encouraging this direction of ministry growth is the news that a contract was recently awarded by the government of Sierra Leone for paving the main road connecting the Southern Province with the Northern. Our village is 10 miles off this road. Additionally, this use of the metal building will greatly enhance our local impact through the GTF Bible Institute by allowing more than one class to be taught at a time. This will facilitate starting new enrollees to be able to take base tier courses while current grads can take continuing education classes. We would also like to offer remedial reading for our institute students. During the 2019/20 dry season, when we originally planned to erect the metal building, the road had been graded and was in excellent condition. Lacking pavement, the road has badly deteriorated in the past few years, rendering it impassable by the larger trucks we would need to bring in building supplies and the lift truck to erect the steel trusses. As you can see, the Covid-19 “crisis” continues to effect our ministry decisions and direction as we try to make adjustments to projects planned five years ago! We are grateful for all who have given specifically to the church building project, and we sincerely hope that you understand our need to shift the proposed use of this metal building. All of the funds coming in designated for the church building fund have gone to that purpose, it will just be a block building rather than metal.

A PARTING PRAYER REQUEST: Looking ahead, I am trying to develop a more seasonal schedule for GTF ministries. I envision the Dry Season Evangelism Circuit seasonally offset by teaching in the GTF Bible Institute during the rainy season. As stated above, we would like to be able to offer more classes in an expanded facility, as well as remedial reading. All of these goals are lacking one major thing: workers! I am in need of help. Please join Laura and myself as we pray for people to fill these needs and expand the reach of this mission's ministry.

Thank you for your continued interest in Gather The Fragments Bible Mission. We greatly appreciate your care for us and the people of Sierra Leone through your faithful prayers and financial giving.

Because He is Worthy

Stephen & Laura Holt

Be sure to scroll to our photo pages below!

Foundation Prep Work



At left and below: The original 40'X80' foundation was hand poured in 2020



The modifications to the foundation were to add steel to the existing concrete work where pillars are needed to support the roof.

Right: We always have plenty of friendly supervision!



Above: Concrete is mixed and poured by hand by the school boys.



Water to mix the concrete is pulled from the well by hand using a bucket on a rope, and then carried on the heads of the school girls, the large containers called "baths" seen mid-right in the photo



Evangelism Circuit



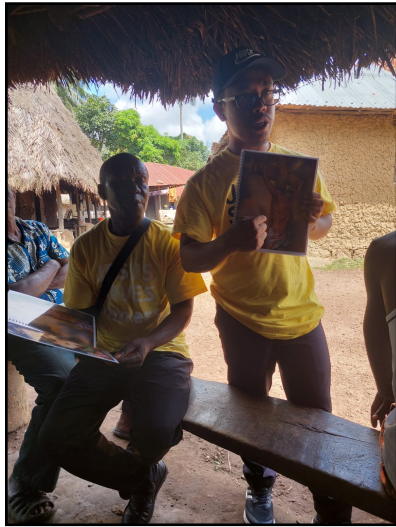
Bro. John Congson and his wife



We were in five schools preaching the banner presentation and distributing scripture portions.

Left: Students with John/Romans booklets.

Below: Explaining to students how to use marked verses in John/Romans.



Bro John preaching the gospel to a small group using The Advocate booklet



Above: Police post

Right: Pastor Paul's church

Below: Pastor Paul in blue check shirt

