



# GTFBM

## Gather The Fragments Bible Mission

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

### FIELD REPORT: OCTOBER 2024

*Greetings to our Family and Friends!*

First, please accept my sincere apology for being so tardy in writing. Since returning in June, life has been very disjointed as I have mostly been dealing with time-consuming (maddening) administrative issues which have required much attention. All of this was due to new policies so I could legally remain in the country. Adding to those frustrations is the abominable state of our road. I understand that it is very difficult for those in the civilized Western world to grasp the miserable condition of our “road” to get to Bo where I do most of my business (photos at the bottom will help!). It is all of 37 miles, but even during the dry season it can take 2-3 hours. Now, amid the peak of the rains, it might take me two hours to travel 13 miles, only to find a truck completely blocking the road, sunk to the axels in muck and mire. I then have to cautiously turn around and go two hours back home. It was over a month before I could get into Bo to take care of banking needs, obtain supplies, get petrol for my generator and other small machinery, as well as diesel for the truck. None of that craziness makes for interesting Field Reports! Oh yes, and work on administrative business. By delaying our report, we now actually have some news to share; some of which is even exciting!

On one trip to Bo, I was able to pull a box truck out of the muck. It was loaded with frozen fish, packed with ice, and headed to the town of Gima for their *luma* (an open market servicing many area villages once a week). I pulled him backward out of the slime then helped him get started back up the road on a better course to avoid the mud pits. Was he ever grateful! He had envisioned losing the entire load of fish. His parting words were, “If I ever get out of here, I am never coming back!”

We are starting to see some stiffening of the slime pits as the change-over to the dry season commences and the rains lessen. Now we will just be left with tank-trap size fissures throughout the length of the road, but at least it will be dry!

**LAND COURT ISSUE:** On July 5, the tribal court read a ruling that the Menjor family, “our side” from whom we purchased the land where the new church is located, lost the claim to ownership. The case has already been submitted by the Menjors on appeal to Magistrate Court (equivalent to our civil court), and has been facing many delays during the eight weeks since being filed. On Friday, September 27, the Magistrate Judge said he needs more time to review all of the evidence from the lower court, and stated there will be a ruling by the end of the year. So, all this time and I still really have nothing much to report on this issue.

Gather The Fragments Bible Mission is kind of caught in the crossfire between two “Christian” families overtaken by their greed and culture. We have a perfectly legal conveyance of the land. Our lawyer in Freetown has assured us there is no fear of losing the property and building, but in the meantime he recommended that we honor the lower court’s ruling to cease and desist all work on the property or use of the building. In the effort of goodwill and trying to keep a proper testimony for the mission, that is my intention.

**DRY SEASON CIRCUIT:** Now for some exciting news! Since much of my administrative business has required travel to Freetown, I took the northern route, an eight hour trip which does not require going through Bo, and is largely on paved roads. Because many of our Partner Churches are located on or near this route, I have pre-staged boxes of supplies including tracts, New Testaments, and other literature in preparation for the upcoming circuit season.

Beginning the last week of November we will be in five churches throughout the Magburaka area. We are also planning to be in a few schools with the possibility of reaching 250+ students! The majority of these students will be Muslim. We have found that the best way to get the word of God into Muslim homes (New Testaments, scripture portions, along with other Christian literature) is to send it home with students. Parents who would otherwise outright reject taking such items during door-to-door visitation, will

allow it in the home if brought in by their children, and will even read it. This is one of the main reasons we work with established churches throughout the country; it is much easier for these local churches to conduct follow-up visits to these homes.

We also have a very full week planned during the Christmas through New Year holidays. This is a time of year when ex-pat Sierra Leoneans return to their homeland en masse. Freetown will literally be flooded with thousands of holiday revelers all needing to hear the gospel. These people, having lived for many years in developed countries, are literate, and speak English well. They are open to receiving tracts and other literature, and will often engage in productive conversation. We will be staying with a long-time partner church, and we are all really looking forward to this Freetown Gospel Blitz! GTF Bible Mission hasn't done a Freetown holiday campaign in several years. It will be exhausting as well as exhilarating as we put in several full days in the heart of the capitol city.

I already have a fairly full schedule for the 2024/25 dry season circuit up through March. We will bring you more on each of these campaigns in future Field Reports and Updates as they develop. Our main focus is to equip, encourage, and embolden existing local churches in proper evangelism techniques. We hold training sessions with interested church members and then take it to the streets. Through this method, we have seen several churches establish branch churches in new areas. This is the military model of "exportable training," and it works!

**MEET MISS LIBERTY:** On September 5, I drove to Lungi International Airport, thankfully on the northern route, thus avoiding our awful road, to pick up Miss Liberty Calaycay De Los Reyes, a citizen of the Philippines. She has raised support to come work with the preschool located on our compound. Liberty is 75 years old, has already taught Christian preschool for 40 years in the Philippines, and wanted to give her remaining years to the service of the Lord, assisting an established mission work. Other than a slightly harrowing experience on our road (detailed on photo pages), she is adjusting well. She is learning that even after teaching for 40 years, she can still learn herself. Children here, unlike what she's used to, are extremely undisciplined and crude in their behavior. She's learning to deal with that in creative ways and truly loves these very needy children. When I say "preschool," you most likely think of 3-5 year olds. Here it's not uncommon for preschool children to be as old as 8 or 9. Needless to say, this has taken some adjustment for our dear sister. This preschool is not directly part of or funded by the mission, we simply allow them to use our classroom during the week. It is a Christian school and we are happy to support them in this way.

In addition to daily teaching in the preschool, Miss Liberty has begun a remedial reading program for older children from the community school. Even by grades 4 and 5, it's not unusual for these children to not even be able to write their own names. She has also started a "teach the teachers" class to help the other preschool teachers be more effective in their efforts with these children. Finally, as if all that weren't enough, Liberty has started a Sunday afternoon Bible club. She reads Bible picture book stories to the children — something so common to us but completely unknown to these children. They are thoroughly enraptured by the stories and the pictures. She will also be incorporating felt board stories to help the children to learn basic Bible principles. As we have found through use of the banners and wordless gospel books, visuals are so very important in this highly illiterate country. These children will greatly benefit from Miss Liberty's diligent efforts and we are very thankful to have her. Sierra Leone still has one of the highest illiteracy rates in the world.

**A SALVATION TESTIMONY:** Saving the best for last, we rejoice to report to you our newest member of the "Former Muslim Band," Foday Jonny. After a long talk, initiated by Foday himself, he professed his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! He is occasionally attending Tuesday evening discipleship class, along with a few others, and also faithfully attends church. But most significantly, Foday has become a very attentive and trustworthy helper to Miss Liberty. Foday is fruit to your account!

We cannot thank you all enough for your prayer and financial support, and especially your concern for the souls in Sierra Leone. We appreciate you being patient with us during this time of lean news to report. We expect several Field Notes Updates as well as full Field Reports in the near future with a busy Dry Season Circuit just another moth away. You remain in our prayers as you serve our Lord in each of your areas.

Because He is Worthy

*Stephen & Laura Holt*

***Be sure to scroll to photo pages below!***



# Playing In The Mud!



(L) This was the first time I got super stuck much earlier in the season. I had to leave the truck over night — with someone sleeping in it so it wouldn't be dismantled and carried away piece by piece in the night! The next day, a large truck from the mining company in Baomahun came and pulled me out.

(R) The fish truck I rescued using a tow line to pull him back, then pulling him up the hill enough to get him out of the muck!

Life's an adventure in Sierra Leone!



Miss Liberty's first time to Bo included this mess on the way in. She had to climb over the stick shift and out my door! With lot's of help, two hours of digging and maneuvering, I was finally able to get back out of the muck and get back on the way to Bo. Liberty had to apply for her resident visa and other administrative issues so had to tag along. Then we still had to get back home as it was getting dark. She prayed all the way to Bo and all the way home after this little adventure!



In Sierra Leone,  
four-wheel-drive isn't  
just for fun!





# Miss Liberty and Her Kids



Lined up for prayer before class



The students are excited to walk their new teacher to school!



Learning new names



Sunday Bible Club



A creative way to teach penmanship! This also gets the kids outside which helps with discipline as they can be moving, be in the fresh air, and still practicing their letters.



Foday Jonny receives a new Bible