



Gather The Fragments Bible Mission

Stephen & Laura Holt

Sierra Leone, West Africa

FIELD REPORT: JANUARY 2025

Greetings to our Family and Friends!

Happy New Year to you all. Maybe this year! We delayed this new year report a little so we could bring you some especially good news from Sierra Leone but we will save that best story for last!

UPDATE ON LAURA: Laura's health declining again. Her "episodes," spasms, cramps, and full-body lock-ups, are becoming more regular, are very painful, strenuous, and taking a big toll on her. She has fallen twice, thankfully with no major injuries, just bruised and sore. As she worsens, I am thankful to be home as it takes the strain off the rest of the family. We have an appointment with a new local neurologist next week. She will work in coordination with the specialist in Boston whom we see at the end of February. We are prayerful this specialist will be able to put all the complex puzzle pieces together, and develop a treatment plan to help Laura's quality of life. We were under the impression that Stiff Person Syndrome (SPS) had been taken off the plate, but apparently not, as that was actually the referral to Boston. SPS is notoriously difficult to diagnose as there are several sub-types, doctors know very little about it, and each patient is so different. Additionally, she had her full genome mapped, and two "concerning mutations" were located. These could be one of several rare neuro-degenerative diseases which might account for her symptoms. An actual diagnosis can only be made by the specialist as she will conduct further tests and closely compare symptoms. Her symptoms also overlap with other rare, non genetic neuro-degenerative diseases, like the SPS. Though Laura definitely shared some symptoms, with her mother, her mom was adopted so there's no way to trace any further back. Plus her mother is deceased so we cannot check her genetics. Thankfully Laura is still able to write quite regularly as well as occasionally work on art projects for Illustrated Evangelism. These two things really keep her going spiritually. Maintaining a healthy sense of humor, Laura likes to joke that she's a mutant lab rat!

LAND DISPUTE: We had been assured by the Magistrate Judge that there would be a final ruling by the end of 2024. Well, here we are well into the new year and still with no ruling. The news out of Baomahun is that the ruling is now slated to be on the 21st of January. We will send out an update if we get any real news for this on-going saga.

BAPTISMS: Shortly before I left for the States, I had the privilege of conducting 14 baptisms! This represents several layers of church growth. Firstly, Pastor Alfred Menjor, recognizing that we had not held a baptism for quite some time, took it upon himself to ask if there were any new members who had not been baptized and wished to be. Secondly, Pastor Menjor conducted the baptism class himself this time, rather than me doing so. This is a big step in growth for Bro. Alfred, and I was very pleased when he agreed that he should do the class. Thirdly, there were three baptism candidates who did not feel fully prepared to take part in the first baptism and requested more teaching and they willingly waited one more week to submit to this important ordinance.

Because our people are so transient, church attendance is down quite a bit reflecting the fluctuation in town population. As the mining company continues to ramp up toward processing, employment opportunities should pick up and the

population grow again. Our core people are continuing to be faithful in attendance. Sierra Leone's unemployment rate is forecast to be above 52% in 2025, while over a quarter of the population lives on less than \$2.00 per day.

DRY SEASON CIRCUIT: As mentioned in our October 2024 report, I had a full circuit schedule planned through March 2025. When it became apparent that I needed to be with Laura, I made arrangements with the pastors to drop off boxes of supplies including tracts, New Testaments, and other literature, along with copies of the Illustrated Evangelism booklets. These pastors and church members are veterans of the Dry Season Evangelism Circuit, they are well experienced and I have every confidence they will do a fine job on their own. It is a blessing to see the growth in their ability to carry on without me and a GTF team. I hope to get reports and photos from each group for future Field Reports.

AND NOW THE BEST FOR LAST: On January 8, a team of two of our men left for an evangelism tour of three villages; Bendu Bam, Yornie, and Gbesseh. The very exciting thing about this is that these men developed the idea, made the contacts, and planned the schedule all on their own! This is a huge step in growth and I am so eager to start getting reports and photos from them, some of which will be included here — which is why we delayed our report. The other exciting part of this story is that these are villages we have never visited before on our Dry Season Evangelism Circuit. These men are taking on new territory! The full story will be given on our photo pages below, combining pictures and text, so be sure to scroll down!

Please rejoice with us as we see very definite evidence of spiritual growth in some our people. This March marks 15 years we have been in Baomahun (16 in Sierra Leone) and I am personally surprised at the unexpected growth which is now, after all the plowing and sowing, springing up. Some of this has only come to light since I have been here in the States. This is a direct reflection of your faithful prayers and giving, and is fruit to your account.

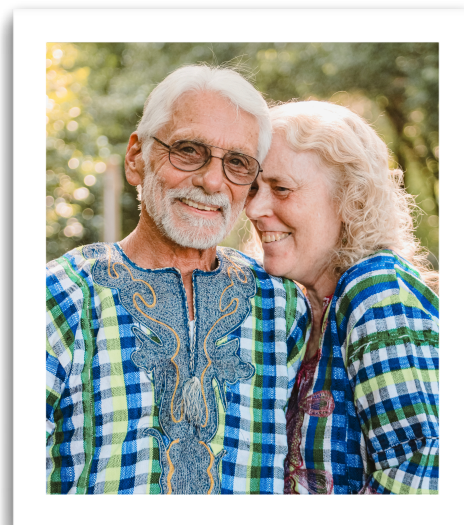
If you did not see the special Field Report we sent in November 2024, I encourage you to please go to the Field Report page on our website, gatherthefragments.com, and read it. As Laura continues to require more doctor appointments and assistance at home, I am actively looking for someone to permanently take over the directorship of our well-established mission. If you have questions, you may contact me via phone or text at 386-624-8370 or by email at gatherthefragments@outlook.com

As always, we are grateful to be your voice in Sierra Leone.

Because He is Worthy

Stephen & Laura Holt

Be sure to scroll to photo pages below!



Dry Season Circuit Prep



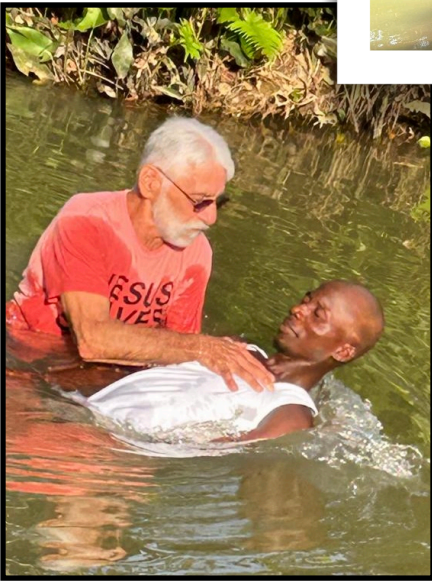
GTFBM equipped 10 churches with materials to carry on with the Dry Season Circuit in my absence. As stated above, these are well trained and trusted churches and I am confident they will make wise use of these materials. I had photos from more churches but unfortunately, I deleted them before sending them to my secretary!

Top Left and Right are Pastor Senesi of The Vine Baptist Church in Freetown. He is seen using the banners from a visit with them in 2001. Knowing he will take good care of the banners, I left him with a set along with the other materials. Bro. Senesi is in the city where literacy is higher and the books will be well used.

Bottom Right is Arlington Baptist Church at Mile 91. Unfortunately, Pastor Suaray was not available to take the delivery himself so his children joyfully received the shipment. Again, this is one of the few churches where we left a set of banners, knowing they will be well used.

Bottom Left is Pastor Lahai of Trinity United Methodist Church. Pastor Lahai is in a difficult position. He now sees the doctrine of the Methodist church as unscriptural but if he is too vocal about it, he will lose his position and his soon-coming retirement pension. He devours Bro. James' books and slips corrected doctrine into his preaching. Upon his retirement, Bro. Lahai plans to return to his ancestral village and begin a Bible believing, doctrinally sound Baptist church.

Baptisms



Please notice the peace on the first man's face. Sierra Leone is 80% Muslim, yet they have no inner peace. This man has found peace in Jesus!

The woman shown receiving her baptism certificate is Elizabeth, Pastor Alfred's sister. For the 15 years we have known her, she has been openly antagonistic to Bible teaching though often claiming to be Christian. She would also claim to be Muslim when she was married to a Muslim man and attend mosque. Praise the Lord for her true salvation, and her brother being able to present her certificate. There has been an obvious softening in Elizabeth since her salvation. True fruit!

Village Visits

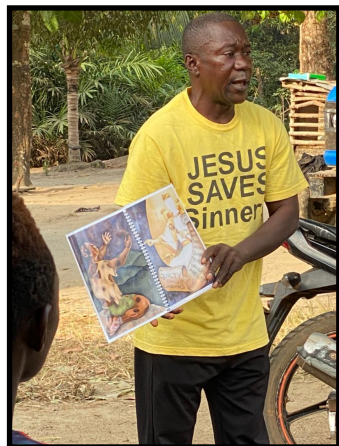


Our adopted son, John (with helmet), and Joseph, ready to head out on their adventure!

Bendu Bam — the first village. After preaching, some booklets were passed around for people to view. The illustration of the cross always deeply engages people.

The bottom right photo is the village Imam (Muslim pastor). From John: "After our presentation with the One Way booklet, we had a great contribution from the Imam. He told the people that we were the first Christians to talk about Christ with no fearness of face. He said he was taught that Christ was the only sinless person and everyone preaching the Quran must believe that or you are wasting your time.

"Additionally, the town chief openly confessed that Christ was the first prophet and will be the last to come again. He has been taught that from the Quran and strongly believes it." Now if only these men will believe the gospel and be saved!



The village of Gbesseh — From John: "The woman in pink has been a church goer, but for reasons known only to her, she decided to go to mosque. But after we talked with her and she understood the gospel story through the illustrations, she finally got truly saved!"

The woman pictured below is Yema, a dear long-time friend from Baomahun. In her advancing years she has returned to her ancestral home of Gbesseh. It was a joy for our team to meet up with her.

The men arrived at the peak of watermelon harvest!



Village Visits

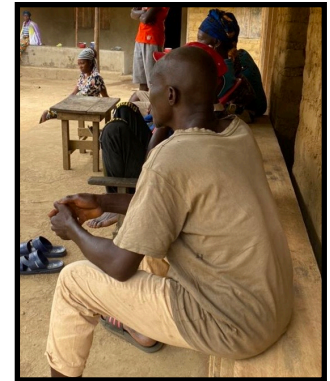
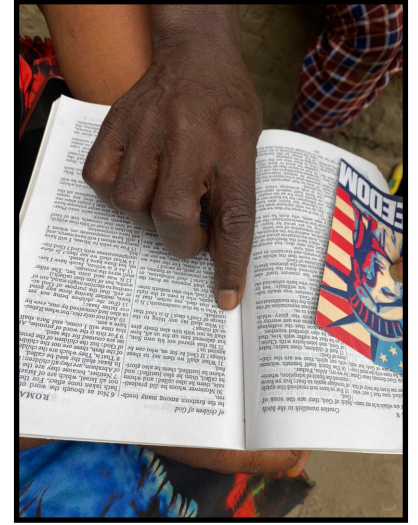


The last village was Yorni.

From John's report: "The man leaning against the stick got saved today! He has been a Muslim since his childhood but finally believes in the Advocate. He believes that someone must be responsible for the remission of our sins."

"He was with us in church today and gave a testimony about how he met us teaching since Friday and has been thinking about it."

As always, the illustrations made a big difference for this man's understanding.



Here the men had a very unusual opportunity. Speaking to the leader of the women's secret Bondo society John said, "It was like putting fuel on a fire! She said we were not allowed because your mission is very different from ours. She was very much angry because she said this place is not a church ground." John went on to report, "She finally accepted us to preach to the women and at last she was the one telling the initiates to listen!" She is pictured in the top left photo wearing the red hat. Eventually she even softened and listened well. Over the years we have seen that the illustrations often have a very calming effect in heated situations like this.

The ladies are resting on beds as they recover from FMG (female circumcision), a horrible but required part of initiation to the society.

The photo at right is a group of women who visited John and Joseph. "These Christian women came to the house where we were staying so we could pray with them, and teach them how to stay in unity. I am glad Brother Joseph is really doing great in this situation," John reported. What a blessing to be a help to these dear sisters in Christ. This underscores the lack of biblical teaching and the benefits of the circuit ministry.

