

2016 Ministry Trip

Praise God for another wonderful trip to Liberia. The UK team consisted of Andy, Daron, Gordon and I and we were joined by up to 11 Liberians. Our time was divided between three principle locations; Fendell near Monrovia, Weala in the heart of the country and Ganglata in the far north near the Guinea border.

The whole trip seemed to have a much greater potential significance than previous trips. We got to know several new pastors who want to work with us. They all appeared to be godly men with a genuine passion for the Gospel. Our visit and the teaching we brought greatly inspired them giving renewed vision and faith for their ministry.

As in previous trips healing played a significant role in demonstrating the present reality of the kingdom of God. Wherever we revisited places we went last time we were greeted with testimonies of healing from that visit and other healings that had taken place since.



Staff at our Chocolate City School

During our three week stay the team must have prayed for between one and two hundred sick people, of whom three quarters testified to being healed immediately. From previous experience we can expect many of the others to have received healing in the days following prayer.

One afternoon we went to a town we had not visited before and it was like a production line of healing. News quickly spread that we were in town and people left whatever they were doing and queued up for healing. Nearly everyone claimed to have been healed. It was just like Jesus said, "whatever city you enter... heal the sick there and say to them, 'the kingdom of God is near.'"

One of the most outstanding healings was of a mentally disabled girl who could not talk or interact with others and who lived cooped up in doors. After Gordon prayed for her she talked freely with him and was soon outside playing with the children and helping with chores.

Although healing was a great encouragement to everyone and of course a huge blessing to those healed, it was only a part of what God was doing. We had two leadership sessions exploring the Gospel that Jesus preached - the Gospel of the kingdom - and discussing what that means for us and our presentation of the Gospel today. We put this into practice as we went out into the communities both demonstrating the kingdom in healing and also in sharing the love and forgiveness of Jesus.

We also provided leadership training for local pastors in the three main locations, which was very enthusiastically received and led to much lively discussion. It quickly became apparent that there was a great need for basic discipleship training in all the churches, so to help with this we spent quite a lot of time simply going through Luke's Gospel applying the stories to our present lives and situations. This simple exercise seemed to be revolutionary and inspirational to everyone, pastor and church member alike.



So both healing and teaching made a big impact, but perhaps the greatest potential impact was in confronting the secret and outlawed tribal religion up in Ganglata. This practice, known locally as Poro (for men) and Sande (for women), is a highly secretive mixture of ancestor worship and shamanism and includes FGM. We arrived in the town on Sunday evening and heard people reporting an "amusing" incident at church that morning. A man had stood up to give thanks to God for the safe return of his son from Poro initiation. On further enquiry we discovered that the town had only just the previous week emerged from 5 months of ritual initiation deep in the forest. The school had been closed, and to our surprise even the churches had closed.

I started to ask which members of the church had been involved and discovered that virtually all apart from the pastor had been. I said that this was no foundation for a church and we had to address this issue as a matter of urgency. The Liberian leaders cautioned me to keep quiet and let them deal with it in their own way. We had been given a warm welcome in this town, but they told stories of other towns where churches had been burnt down and missionaries hounded out when they tried to confront Poro. They wanted to take it slowly in fear of antagonising the town leaders. The Lord showed me two powerful scriptures which exactly fitted the situation and the team joined in prayer for the Lord to expose and confront the darkness of Poro. Despite frequent cautions from our Liberian leaders I felt strongly that we must be explicit in talking about the need to turn right away from Poro and trust only in Jesus because most of the people did not realise there was anything wrong with mixing the two. Indeed some believed that to be a good Christian you had to be faithful to the Poro beliefs and rituals. We invited the town leaders to a meeting with us on our last evening, and during the intervening days the Lord gave the Liberian leaders courage. To my astonishment they presented the scriptures to the town leaders very boldly. The four men responded with understanding, thanking us for bringing the matter to their attention and saying they really wanted to bring change. We prayed individually for them and they went home talking about how they were determined to lead the town into the truth and light of Jesus. The next morning they sent a gift to thank us for what we had said.



It remains to see the fruit of this meeting, but if they are true to their word and make public declarations then that will open a huge door for the Gospel in the whole area, removing the fear of retribution for those turning away from Poro and Sande to Jesus.

I often wonder what on earth our little team of ordinary white brothers are doing going to Liberia, but yet again it seems that Jesus has his reasons. From the stories that we hear I am convinced that the impact of our visits is far greater than we realise.



A church in Weala we are starting to work with.

June - Shocking News

In June we got the shocking news that the whole community in Fendel, where we have a school, has been bulldozed by the government, rendering hundreds of people homeless. The pastor's home along with those of many of the church members were destroyed, along with their possessions and livelihoods. There has been a long running dispute between the government university and the local residents over land ownership. The residents have purchased land and received registration documents, but the government says the documents are not valid and finally gave two weeks notice to leave. No one had anywhere to go

and could not believe they would actually carry out their threat. But the army turned up and bulldozed a large area, returning on successive days to continue the destruction.

The pastor and all the church members have been made homeless and their livelihoods are destroyed. Both the church and the school we have just built have been demolished despite having legally registered the land. We are keeping in touch and offering prayer and financial support at this very difficult time. Despite this terrible blow as these people are struggling with the aftermath of the Ebola crisis, the pastor and other leaders I have spoken to have been amazingly strong in their faith, going around the community trying to give hope and practical help to others.

