



## SOW News Update – July 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we are delighted to share with you some brief news from The Gambia, and to ask for your continued support in prayer.

Please continue to pray for the full-time students at Tubakuta campus - John Alsowe, Sorty Dakunha, Augusta Holmes, Emmanuel Jatta, Winifred King Williams and Sabino Sanyang – to grow in their knowledge and love of God.

Their studies have included Jonah, Mark 9-16, and Acts, Principles of Preaching, Theology for Preachers, and preaching practice on the book of Job. Plus sessions on Islam, spiritual gifts, and some local 'hot topics' such as The Blood of Christ. Discipleship studies and Farming God's Way are also ongoing throughout the course.

At the Fajara campus the group has continued their part-time studies using the EXPLORE material from George Whitefield College. So far this year students have written exams on Unit 3 (The Work of the Apostles), Unit 5 (The Books of Moses) and Unit 6 (The Prophets).

There have been quite a few extra activities at SOW too. Simply The Story oral Bible teaching programme returned in February for the Level 2 training seminar.

A small team from our partners at Christ Church Balham visited led by Jonny Burgess, a former Crosslinks Mission Partner who worked at SOW from 2014 to 2019. He made these observations:

- When I left the Gambia 3.5 years ago, the huts were half-built and had no running water or electricity. Now they are very comfortably habitable, complete with water and power! The farmland is being really well used for both SOW and the village. The holistic vision for farming at SOW is excellent and inspiring - combining worshipful stewardship of God's land, vocational training for SOW students as part of preparing them to support themselves in ministry in the future, and generous witness to neighbours of SOW.
- We sat in on devotions and classes at SOW for those 2 days and were very encouraged by the attentive and hungry batch of students, and the excellent quality of the teaching that we enjoyed from Adriano (Gambian faculty member, who was a student when I was there).
- One highlight was a preaching practice class led by Steven. They are working through Job. I was slightly alarmed at how ambitious a choice that was for the students, but Steven was resolute in his ambition and explained the keen contextual wisdom of grasping the message of Job in a context where the prosperity gospel is so rife. By way of illustration, one of the largest churches in the Gambia has been teaching recently that if you die before the age of 70, you will not be buried or even acknowledged by the church in your death, as it's clearly a sign that you have died under God's curse or due to backsliding.



SOW has continued to spearhead training church leaders in expository Bible teaching by co-hosting a three-day LANGHAM PREACHING AFRICA Vision Casting Seminar for church leaders, run by the Langham Director for Africa and the West Africa Regional Director. The plan is to run a second seminar then to launch Preaching Clubs.



## SERVANTS OF THE WORD

We are delighted and thanking God for blessing the second SOW ANNUAL PREACHING SEMINAR, held on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2023. A much larger group, 83 in all, attended the programme representing a wide variety of churches and ministries.

Former staff member Nick Algeo was a guest speaker, alongside current SOW staff Adriano Mbackeh, Paul Mahmoud, and Steven Musa-Kormayea. The focus of the day was 'PREACHING CHRIST' from the whole Bible.



And praise God that there is an increasing amount of SOW farm land under cultivation.

### **Please pray with us:**

- Thank God for good numbers at the one-off and special events, and pray that SOW will have a broad impact on the church in The Gambia, and beyond, in this way.
- Please pray that the preaching conferences and seminars would make an impact, encouraging church leaders to invest in training a next generation of faithful bible teachers, and that godly men and women would be willing and able to commit to studying for word ministry at SOW
- For continued faithful gospel witness across The Gambia. There is increasing persecution of the church, several churches have recently been attacked or vandalized. All these cases were reported to the police but they dismissed each one as an isolated incident.

*Praise God for your continued prayer and financial support for gospel work in West Africa.*

*Thanks from all the staff, students and directors of Servants of the Word, The Gambia.*

*"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1:3-5).*