



**Thank You
for your support
from Rachel Munn**

In February I was given the opportunity to talk about Mercy Ships. Following my talk, several people from St Mary's church have given me money, which has been such a lovely blessing. Thank you so much!

Mercy Ships

Mercy Ships is a global Christian charity, operating hospital ships in developing nations since 1978. Mobilising people and resources worldwide and serving all people without regard for race, gender or religion. Aiming to bring hope and healing to the forgotten poor.



Mercy Ship, M/V Anastasis in port

The work involves medical/surgical care, community development and outreach to present Jesus to people. It provides services free of charge with volunteers from over 40 nations. My aim is to go and

work with Mercy Ships from June, working as a nurse and probably taking on a few other roles also.

The M/V Anastasis is in West Africa and about to work in Liberia. It is soon to be replaced by the Africa Mercy, a new ship, about to set sail. This ship was previously a Danish train ferry, over 16,000 tons. Over the last few years it was converted to have a few wards, theatres, a CT scan, x-ray machine and much more on board....So it will be exciting to see this larger ship start work.



**Bintu
before and after
surgery**

I hope to send a few details of my travels while I work on board. If you have any questions then do email me rivertwo@hotmail.com and I will endeavour to get back to you as soon as possible. For other information then do check the website for mercy ships - www.mercyships.org

***Blessings to you all from
Rachel Munn***

Editor: As part of our continuing series about St Mary's annual parish giving to charity, I am delighted to include this article from Rachel, following her excellent talk in church. The PCC had already decided to give some financial support to Rachel and her work with Mercy Ships. We are now very excited to have a direct link with Rachel with the prospect of regular updates in this magazine. Do, please, remember Rachel and her work, in your prayers.



Rachel's Travels

Africa 2007

January 2007

I'm writing because I'm going to be working with an organisation called Mercy Ships at the beginning of June 2007. I will be away for a minimum of a year in Africa, as an intensive care nurse. I wonder if you would read this letter and consider supporting me.

Previously I worked with Mercy Ships for 2½ years (January 2000 - July 2002). My aim on leaving in July 2002 was to study, spend time with family, and move South. I moved from Leicester to Southampton, and found a job in Winchester's Intensive Care Unit. All in all a good plan and met some fantastic friends along the way.

Official bit

Mercy Ships is a global Christian charity that has operated hospital ships in developing nations since 1978. Their aim is to bring hope and healing to the forgotten poor, mobilising people and resources worldwide and serving all people without regard for race, gender or religion.

It provides health care services as well as community development services free of charge....

- Surgeons operate on people with problems such as facial tumours, cataracts, cleft lips, fistulas and repair of orthopaedic problems,
- other teams work on constructing schools, hospitals, wells etc
- and others partner with local people and empower communities to help themselves.
- Most importantly with all this comes the message of the nature and character of a loving God.....



Jesus is spoken about, to people, who may never have had an opportunity to hear about him.

My Role

My main role will be in nursing whilst working onboard so here are a couple of stories that might give an idea of what I will be involved in.

Cleft lip kids...

One of the simplest surgeries is a cleft lip repair. These little ones are just four of the babies operated on recently who had cleft lips. This happens when the baby is formed in the womb, and can result in malnutrition or even death as the baby is unable to breast feed. Not surprisingly this was a very noisy week that kept the paediatric nurses busy. Such cute babies were hard to resist and everyone was willing to lend a hand, and they and their mothers had lots of visits from smitten crew members.



An emergency, Autumn 2006....

It gets complicated sometimes as in any hospital. Recently a lady called Eunice, had surgery to remove a thyroid (goitre) which had grown to the size of a grapefruit in her neck. A few hours after surgery, her thyroid artery burst. Prompt action by the ward nurses on duty and swift intervention by the emergency medical team saved her life. She was stabilised as much as possible and taken back to theatre to stop the bleeding. She received 11 units of blood from crew members who responded to emergency overhead pages that evening. Donors lined up in the corridor and blood was being urgently taken by our lab techs and ICU nurses in all the medical rooms. Bev (ward manager writes)When I phoned her family that evening to explain what had happened, I had the privilege of being able to pray with them. She spent a couple of days in intensive care, but six days after the event she was dancing around the ward in our Sunday service and gave an amazing testimony as to how God had saved her life. At times like this, I am amazed at how the crew come together to give their skills and prayers.

Initially I will work on the M/V Anastasis (the ship pictured on the front page) which will be in Liberia. My role as nurse will go hand in hand with presenting Jesus to people.... Not to impose my views..... but to talk about Him, pray with people as they will allow and pray for the places we stay in.



Thank you for reading this newsletter, I've only included a small amount of info. I should really tell you more about the privilege of working for Mercy Ships, of the huge no. of people changed, I didn't begin to say about dentists and sheep..... perhaps check out www.mercyships.org

I'm hoping to find friends who would consider praying, helping with financial support and staying in touch.

I'm looking to rent my flat from February, pack all my things into my parents' house and fly in June. So my first prayer request is for God's guidance and provision over the next few months.

Let me know what you think, if you would consider supporting me and do ask me lots of questions. Please email, phone, write, or meet up for coffee.....

With love
Rachel Munn





Liberia's People

Rachel's travels March – May 2008

Screening day – 18th Feb.

I love days like these. I think I've mentioned them before, how the people come to see if Mercy ships can help them (approx. 700 this day) mostly at the beginning of an outreach. In February we worked from 0600 till 2000 at the Samuel Doe stadium. It's a hot, busy, chaotic day with people everywhere. Most ship crew can get involved with jobs, such as giving out water (very helpful when needing to take blood samples), security and playing games with the children; it's a great day to work together. Many of those we can't help are prayed for; occasionally God blesses what we can't do and heals someone, giving their eyesight to them.

My job was to coordinate blood taking, on all patients scheduled for surgery and I was very grateful for Stephanie taking blood from the children/babies.



Since screening day the ship's hospital has been busy. It would be easy to say that almost 200 Liberian people are on the ship each day receiving help either for themselves

or relatives. Perhaps there are 55 inpatients with 25 care givers and their visitors who come in the evening. Then you have 20-30 eye patients having day surgery and their visitors, physio for patients on the ward and post op visits following skin grafts or club feet repairs, 15- 20 other post op visitors and 8-15 admissions or patient discharges. Occasionally a patient or two referred by one of the local hospitals for a CT scan/x-ray and a few who turn up to see if we can help them. I think many of these people see the Jesus film at least once, hear a testimony and are prayed for. It is a privilege to see how each part works on the ship and fits together, especially with all the complications that arise or could arise with such an amazing group of people from many different backgrounds and nationalities.... sorry if that sounds like I'm boasting, but God is good and has such great plans wherever we happen to be.



Ibrahim is a very cute 1yr 9mth toddler coming for a cleft palate repair, who was so happy until we went and did surgery, (changing one's mouth isn't that easy to understand for a little one). His story started at birth when he was left in the bush by his parents. His uncle found him and took him to the Mercy Ship clinic in Sierra Leone, who brought him to the local orphanage, only to be adopted by the couple running the orphanage. Augusta (his new mum) brought him to Mercy Ships initially for the cleft lip repair and this time for the cleft palate repair.

My next little one to mention is Blessing, a child of 9yrs, in hospital with her Mum and has been with us over six weeks. She was in one of the local hospitals having a problem with her knee, was given penicillin, which caused an allergic reaction and developed Noma (also known as cancrum oris). Noma occurs when the bacteria on a person's skin starts eating or melting away the skin. For Blessing, noma has taken away her lips and surgically we aim at giving them back. The initial problem was that she still couldn't walk and so first we provided her with skin grafts to her right knee and a lot of physio as the graft heals. Blessing has been through so much and the first part of surgery for placing or moving skin to make her lips is taking a long time to heal and it's a lot for a little person to go through. The family are Christians and have been adopted by a couple of crew members (which means they will visit Blessing while she is on board). One of the teachers has also started doing school work and setting home work, which Blessing seems to be enjoying so far.



How am I doing?

So this is like any job - that is, great one day and hard the next. One major difference is praying at the beginning of each shift, before patients go for surgery, when they go home, when someone is having a hard time, when we cannot help.....

I have a good small group I go to each week, some great days out to the beach or restaurant and other days that feel very confined to the ship (I miss being home, sometimes). Once in a while I get involved in one of the 'Mercy Ministries' such as going to an orphanage called 'God's children's home', and also talking with women from the 'missionaries of charity'. I shouldn't forget that we've had some extra days off in the last few weeks which has been good, but nothing compared to the holiday I'm looking forward to in July when I will get to see my new niece, Alice (2 and a half weeks) and of course Rhianna (2 and a half years).



I hope all is well with you. Thank you for your support, friendship and prayers. I'd love to hear how you are doing if you find a moment

With love
Rachel Munn



The final stretch in Liberia

Rachel's travels June - September 2008

Future Plans

It is now 16 months since I've been working with Mercy Ships which includes approx. 14 months in Liberia. The time seems to have passed so quickly, it won't be long before I'm home again in Southampton. The next stop for the Africa Mercy will be leaving Liberia for Tenerife 13th December and sailing to Benin in February 2009 (another West African country).

Church

I've started going to a local church, *Pillar of Fire* in a place called upper Caldwell. The church is led by Pastor Sam who speaks just the right words when he gives the message. He works with Mercy Ships during the week as a day worker/translator.

I first met Pastor Sam last year on a screening day, by the ship, in which the translators needed to go home as it was late. Pastor Sam stayed an extra few hours until we finished. He shines as someone who works hard, is diligent and goes the extra mile. A few friends have been going regularly to his church, and have been supporting it. One of our German crew members, Christian, is going to stay after the ship leaves. I also like the fact the service lasts an hour and a half, which is impressive for an African church. Each week the church is full of children as two orphanages are nearby, combined that's 100 children, fortunately not all turn up each week!



Pastor Sam with his wife Tabitha and daughters Sunday and Praise and a few others.....

Ward translators

I am getting sentimental as I write this letter to think we will leave in 2 months. I work with such great people and this will be a long goodbye. Many of the translators have kept working with us since Mercy Ships arrived. Their jobs also include cleaning floors, taking out the rubbish and serving food. It is certainly hard for them to work with our western ideals!! As I am writing this I went to the ward to talk with some of the patients and met with Mama Louise, one of our older and wiser translators. Mama Louise shines as someone who cares, will give a hug and be so good to have around when a patient is anxious or needs encouragement and prayer. Then there is Helen who makes me laugh, and plays practical jokes. Palmetta smiles and often laughs when she sees me. Altogether

we have 41 day workers and translators on the ward who we find through the local churches. If you remember please would you pray for them to find jobs once the ship leaves (there is 85% unemployment, so this will be hard for them).



Mama Louise with Holly (a nurse from New Zealand)

Teaching

I have started doing some teaching sessions with the translators who are also qualified nurses or student nurses. My aim was to do lessons on topics of their choice, because they really wanted to learn. One of the translators, Judy, said the biggest lesson she had learnt was the way we as nurses, on the ship, spoke to the patients. The next teaching is on the equipment we use like the CT scan, Ultrasound.... I've been quite excited about this idea of teaching although I'd like to have more time to spend with them. Judy's idea was I should do this more often and at least weekly, oh my!

Patients

The last few months I have got to know Kou and her son Larry (1-2 yrs). She had a burn contracture to her left side so she came to us for release of the contractures. This has meant she walks with crutches until all is healed. Unfortunately the wound developed an infection which is why they have had an extended stay. Therefore,

Larry looks for opportunities to escape with a few other children. They definitely provide plenty of entertainment, and work, to keep in view. It's not quite this bad, but keeping doors closed and children safe is a constant job for carers, patients, translators, nurses and visitors.....



Kou and Larry with Kelly (nurse from the U.S.)

I think I should mention I have plenty of time to rest, particularly going out for coffee and to the beach! Thought I should say before anyone wonders if I have time off. I was very glad for a brief holiday in July and look forward to coming home again on December 23rd. It can be quite 'intense' with so many people and friends around. There's a lot going on most of the time and friends coming and going, changing relationships. So a holiday is always welcome (many nurses commit for 3 months).

Right now I thank God for continuing to rent my flat, and for a great day on Saturday at Firestone, for recent closer friendships on the ship and good friends/ family back home. I can't do this with out your prayers and financial support!!!!!! thank you.

With love Rachel Munn

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Phone: 001 954 538 6110 ext 4230 - my cabin!



Africa Mercy in Benin

Rachel's travels with Mercy Ships, January 2009 Newsletter

Sailing to arriving

We started sailing two weeks ago from Santa Cruz in Tenerife. Arrived in Benin this last Tuesday (which was slightly delayed and not unusual for the ship to have 'problems' getting into Benin) and meant we had plenty to do in setting up the hospital. The aim was to have some VIP's tour the ship on Thursday which on this occasion was the Ministry of health for Benin and the US ambassador. The setting up included taking the wax off the floors and rewaxing finished by setting up the hospital as if to receive patients. It's amazing what you can do with a large team of people. Fortunately those visiting seemed to be impressed with how clean it was..... phew!



Leaving Tenerife and arriving in Benin



Benin, West Africa

Benin was previously known as Dahomey until its independence in 1975. It was taken over by the French in 1892 which makes French the official language (in addition to French 'only' 53 other languages are

spoken). Considered one of the most stable and safest countries in the region it still ranks 163 out of 177 poorest nations in the world (2005 stats). Porto Novo is the capital, with Cotonou being the economic capital and where we are docked.

In its past this country was involved in slave trading of 20,000 people a year sent to Haiti, Jamaica and Brazil. This brought voodoo over to these countries - 60% of Beninese people follow traditional African religions essentially known as voodoo. The voodoo belief is based on one Supreme Being who rules over a number of lesser deities, spirits and saints. Obviously this is a very brief overview, which hopefully gives you an idea of Benin. It's exciting to be here after 6 weeks in Tenerife.



Across
the
bridge
from
Hotel
du Lac

Working here

Mercy Ships aims to increase the work of our hospital. In this last year we mainly had 4 of the 6 operating rooms working, so we want to get all 6 working through out the year... that's a big deal. We don't have all the beds needed in the ship to get that working, we've got 70. Then there are staffing issues of increasing capacity and using local resources. We are thinking of

turning a lecture room into a ward. This is definitely a unique place, don't you think.

Other projects are similar to last year including agriculture, mental health care, church leaders conference, biomedical training, dental, infrastructure development (project still to be confirmed) and palliative care amongst other things including the field eye team.

Unique to this hospital

Yesterday we had an 'open hospital' for all the crew to see the operating room and wards. This involved certain activities including:

- pin the bone on the skeleton,
- crew members trying to be nurses (nurses becoming difficult patients, although some of the children joined in being patients)
- learning to suture and intubate a resus annie/dummy).

I think we had plenty of laughter especially in the digestive room.....



Starting

This really is a great time to be working, as we set up the hospital, have the screening days (which will be Thursday 19th and Friday 20th) and see the start of surgeries. For those who don't know, the screening days are when people of Benin can come and see if we can help them with surgery. That can be about 1000 people, many with some desperate need of help. Almost all the crew get involved in making this a good day from giving out water, to the surgeons deciding who can have surgery. The queues can start at 0300.....

Prayer

So you see there's a lot going on and we decided this is a good time to pray at the beginning. We've been praying with the 24/7 idea this week. Basically we asked crew to sign up for an hour over 24 hours a day for 7 days. It's something we did in Liberia before we left as a few patients were not healing. Just so you know they were all fine before we left. So I would value your prayers for this new time, for screening day, protection, and God to increase his gifts in us and his Holy Spirit to be poured out. I believe we have a powerful God and he worked in Liberia in many ways including healing a kid who was mute... so may he do more here in Benin.

Future plans

One final message is that my 2 years with Mercy Ships is up in June, but I've decided to come home in April for a conference at my church in Southampton and a few family parties. I love the poor in West Africa (especially the children), so this isn't an easy decision to go. Mercy Ships is a great organisation but the ship can be quite intense with so many people living together and changing.

The next step is figuring out what to do next - not entirely sure but I think I will stay in Southampton - Looking forward to catching up with you all

with love Rachel Munn

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