



News from the Greggs

On board the Anastasis somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean

Newsletter 17
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Togo

Situated next door to Ghana and Benin in West Africa, Togo is a hot and humid former French colony with many needs. It is politically stable but has Africa's longest serving dictator and a record of poor human rights. Like Benin, the culture is steeped in witchcraft and voodoo-ism and many of those who practice Christianity or Islam mix their religion with ancestral and spirit worship.

Pop: 5 million
Av. Life expectancy: 55
Av annual income: £200
Exports: cocoa, cotton, coffee

We're on the way to TOGO

Dear friends,

Following 3½ months in Freetown, Sierra Leone we are now about to begin the second half of the African outreach in Togo – where we will stay until the end of June.

The ship had a very fruitful ministry in Sierra Leone — building on the work and the relationships from last year. However, each time we sail away we are daunted by the magnitude of the need in Sierra Leone and how small an impact we have been able to make. The Anastasis hopes to return for a third visit and for longer, this November.

As a family we found it quite challenging being docked in Freetown as we were confined to the ship more than we would have liked. However we did have the chance for a wonderful holiday in the Gambia with Vicki's Mum and

Chris' Mum and Dad which was a great break away from the tensions of being in Sierra Leone. Stefan loved the attention he received from his grandparents and from the friendly Gambian people. Our parents enjoyed their African experience and Chris's Mum was very well during and after the trip.

We returned to Freetown on another ship, the MV Doulos — another Christian ship which was spending a week docked alongside the Anastasis. It was great to sail with them and make some new friends.

We appreciate and your correspondence which keeps us smiling!

Thanks again for your support,

Love from Vicki, Chris and baby Stefan

Patient update: Hawa, Tamba and Abubacar

An update on the patients mentioned in the last newsletter. All 3 have had successful operations and are now back in their communities, except for Tamba who has gone to Guinea to search for his family. He lost touch with them in the war and until recently had felt too ashamed and depressed at his looks to find them. Abubacar who swallowed the caustic soda, can now eat and speak like any other little boy and Hawa has a nose for the first time in her life! She was sad to leave the ship — she actually enjoyed being in hospital! She had been rejected all of her life and remarked as she left us "I have never seen so much care and concern and because of what I've seen and heard here, I know now that God does love me. I never knew that before and I never knew what it felt like to belong. Now I do."

Chris's corner

I am really enjoying the challenges of my job — now we are better staffed, it has become more managerial and this year started with planning and budgeting for the changes and upgrades in the IT systems for 2003. I have also been fitting out a generator (donated in Guernsey) to pump out wells for the water and sanitation team which was fun!

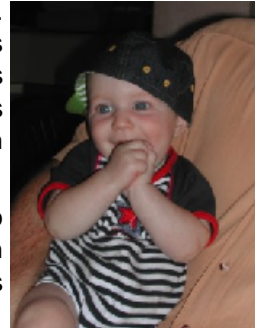
The MV Doulos

- * One of 2 ships run by an organisation called Operation Mobilisation (OM)
- * Similar to the Anastasis, the Doulos is a Christian community of many nationalities serving as volunteers
- * Their mission is to mobilise the church in training and acts of compassion
- * The ship has a huge bookshop which is open to the public and a large lounge for conferences.
- * In Africa they focus on HIV/AIDS education and youth work too.

Stefan's developments

Stefan (African name 'Lamin') basks in the attention he receives from everyone he meets. He likes to be out and about seeing everything that is going on and enjoys splashing in his little paddling pool. He smiles a lot and always has a giggle for Winnie the Pooh. He sleeps wherever we put his yellow blanket — which was very useful on holiday, and so far, he has enjoyed all the solids we have given him — almost leaping out of his high chair with excitement as the spoon approaches.

It is great to see him with the patients on the ward. They adore him and he is too young to notice that they have funny looking faces or bandages around their heads. Having been blessed with so many clothes and toys when we were in Guernsey, it has been great to pass on some of them to other babies we meet and see them enjoying them too.



Vicki's news

Stefan keeps me busy — he is so inquisitive! It is a bit frustrating being on the ship though, I would like to be out with the people more, but it is not safe to walk around Freetown and I have limited opportunities to go out with ship teams. It would be great to have another Mum with a baby on board — sometimes I feel a bit isolated. Having said that, I do make the most of the chances I do get to go ashore. I have been doing some teaching in Molambay one day a week with the women who are part of the micro-enterprise project (soap making, bread making, gardening and sewing). My subject was reproductive health — requested by the ladies themselves. It was interesting to hear about

some of their beliefs and they in turn were fascinated to hear about how babies are produced. I was amazed at how little they knew and was encouraged by their resolve to prevent unwanted pregnancies by using family planning (a very taboo subject prior to my input). There was an instant bond between us following Stefan's visit to the village and they asked me lots of questions about how I cared for him which gave me a chance to share more health messages with the proof of a healthy baby for them to see! One elderly lady was fascinated by his white skin, red hair and blue eyes. She assured me that one day he would have many wives! (In Islam wealthy men can have 4 wives!)

Each Saturday I was part of a Mercy ministry team. It was with mixed feel-

ings that I went to the refugee camp where I worked last year. I felt angry because it was still there and the conditions had not improved at all. However, it was lovely to have the children all crowding around me excitedly singing the songs we had taught them and some of them, proudly showing me their shoes (which we had given to each child the previous year). This year we gave out over 400 second-hand T-shirts and nearly started a riot as the adults in the camp desperately wanted a T-shirt too.

I also had the chance to visit two schools with a ship team and have some input into some health education lessons. I would love the opportunity to do more of this in future.

Giving away donations

It has been wonderful to see how the things donated in Guernsey and Plymouth have been used in Sierra Leone. The tools and bicycles created a great deal of excitement, and



seeing the houses go up and the land being prepared for palm plantations—all funded by people 'at home' made us feel very proud.



The care packs were received by polio victims and the stationary was given away to some very needy schools in Freetown. Having seen for myself the sort of conditions that these children endure at school I can imagine what a huge blessing those supplies would have been.

Some of the T-shirts and undies were given to refugees and orphans. Others were given to our patients, along with towels, soap and toothbrushes. I cannot describe how precious these little things (that we consider necessities) are to the people who receive them. *THANK YOU SO MUCH* to all who gave them.

