



News from the Greggs on the Anastasis in Togo, West Africa

Newsletter 18

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Ministry in the city of Lome, TOGO

Dear friends,

Greetings from a very hot, sticky and stormy Togo. We are in the rainy season and the thunderstorms are quite spectacular. Last week Vicki even got stuck in the mud in one of the ship 4x4's. It was quite an adventure!

It has been a successful outreach here in Togo with many individuals having life-changing surgeries, communities being inspired to change through health education and micro-enterprise projects and an impact on local churches. Crew have also worked in orphanages, schools and hospitals with those dying of AIDS. The construction projects have resulted in new classrooms for 2 village schools (primary and secondary), latrines

and a village clinic. Vicki has visited these projects and seen some of the tools donated in Guernsey in action. The clinic is primarily for mother and child health and midwives have been trained by ship crew. The first baby to be delivered was named 'Mercy' by her mother and is doing very well.

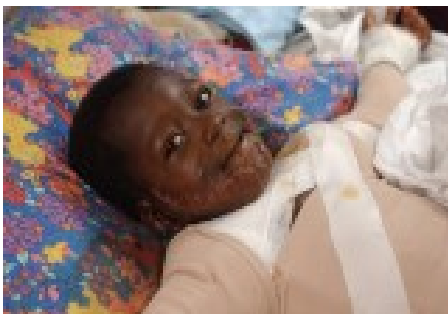
Thank you once more for your emails, letters and phone calls. After an intense 7 months serving in W Africa, your support has been the encouragement we have really needed.

With love,
Vicki, Chris and Stefan

Patient stories



Sam was born with a cleft lip, and with no chance to have it repaired, he learned at a young age to ignore the taunts of other children, and the pity and stares of adults. He didn't consider going to school but worked a farm growing cassava, maize and palm trees. Marriageable age came and went for Sam as no woman would have him. They didn't want their children to look like him, they said. Finally, however, one woman did see past the cleft which marred his face and at 55, he was married and was able to have two perfect sons. Now he has had his surgery on the Anastasis and he and his wife can rejoice together.



Jonathon. The screams of a four-year-old boy echoed over the dry savannah unheard by his mother who was deaf. Burns consumed his tiny body as flames from a bushfire burned 90% of his body. Amazingly, Jonathon survived but after months and months in a Mission hospital Jonathon had burn contractures in his elbow, arms and hips, his joints in bent positions that made walking awkward and painful.

When he arrived on the Anastasis he was terrified and not without reason. An operation, painful dressing changes and physio awaited him. But Jonathon soon melted at the love he was shown by the crew and became a bundle of fun and mischief despite his pain — an inspiration to us all.

VVF ladies. At present the ward is filled with ladies having fistula repairs for incontinence which is usually due to trauma in childbirth. It is a difficult time for them as they endure humiliating procedures and discomfort, and remember the time that they lost their baby, their dignity and often their whole family through no fault of their own. Please pray for them and for the nurses who care for them as sensitively as they can. As I write this, news has just come to us that 2 of the ladies who had repair surgery during our first visit to Sierra Leone, have now become pregnant! It is possible for these ladies to have children if they wait for a year following the operation and have Caesarean sections. Arrangements have been made with a hospital and a fund has been set up to provide Caesarean sections for these women. We await news of the forthcoming deliveries!

Woman's work for Vicki!

Working in Togo has been a joy for me. It has been much easier for Stefan and I to leave the ship and as he is older I can leave him with others without worrying! I have been doing health teaching one day a week with my main focus being women's issues — safe pregnancy, family planning etc. We spend a lot of time in discussion as there is great fear, misconception and negative attitudes that need to be overcome before the facts can be received.

Once more I am reminded that development really comes through relationship and trust with those who are trying to help and not just from information giving. I have been teaching in the village, at a women's conference and also training our local helpers who in turn teach the patients on the ward. On Saturdays I take a

team to the Wuiti girl's home. The home started when Victoire, a Catholic sister came across a girl living on the street who had been rejected by her family. She decided to give her a home and educate her. Now her house is bulging at the seams with 11 girls in similar circumstances, unwanted, unloved and helpless. Victoire is now counting the cost of her compassion, even begging herself, when she hasn't enough money to feed the girls.

As well as helping by providing donations, each Saturday we visit and do a simple programme with games, crafts, drama, puppets and stories. Our aim is to show them that each one is special and matters to God. They love our visits and we in turn are so blessed by their response to us.

What is Chris up to?

The IT department is going well - it is fully staffed at the moment with people who work hard and great progress has been made in developing and improving the quality of service that we provide to the crew. Recently we have been working on installing a new server and backup system and I have been planning for the projects that we will be doing during this summer. It has been very satisfying to see many of the ideas and goals which I have had over the past years finally coming into place.



Stefan's news

Stefan has a ministry of his own, bringing a smile to worn out crew members and joy to the patients. He enjoys playing with the other babies on the ward (and stealing their toys!) but has had to be stopped from putting other babies feet in his mouth!

He is quite unstoppable, full of energy and into everything. At 7 months he began crawling and pulling himself up to stand and now loves to walk around the furniture and grin at everyone. Stefan is quite at home being carried on Vicki's back and travelling in the Landrover. We count ourselves very lucky that he is healthy and growing well and sleeping all night. He seems to love visiting new places and is very sociable.

What happens next?

We have only another 4 weeks to go in Africa. Then we sail to Europe for the fundraising and publicity tour. During this time we will also be returning home for a short while for the happy occasion of Nick's wedding (Chris' brother).

Here are the details of our European ports ...

EUROPE ITINERARY 2003

Cadiz, Spain (Shipyard)	10 th July - 22 nd Aug
Rotterdam, Netherlands	26 th Aug - 9 th Sept
Sunderland, UK	10 th - 29 th Sept
Emden, Germany	30 th Sept - 23 rd Oct
Malaga, Spain	3 rd Nov - 10 th Nov

If you find yourself nearby PLEASE come and visit.

For the last few months we have also been thinking about our future. In August the 3rd year of our commitment to Mercy Ships is up. At the moment, we are planning to leave the Anastasis and return to Guernsey at the end of this year.

