

News from the Greggs

Serving with Mercy Ships at the International Operations Centre, Texas



Our news this Christmas ...

Africa Mercy and Anastasis Sunset Picture

Happy Christmas to y'all

After the cold weather of Newcastle our year in Texas has been a warm and welcome change.

We feel almost settled here now. God has answered our prayers and we have a lovely home in the countryside complete with cats (and the odd scorpion!) and a great car which Stefan is very proud of as it has 'hot air balloons' in case of an accident (airbags).

Chris is enjoying his job a lot more now. The transition to a more senior management position was a bit daunting initially but now he really feels like he can make a difference in the running of the Information Services department here at head office and the IT systems on the ship and other offices. He was lucky enough to be part of the crew for the maiden voyage of the Africa Mercy, commissioning the satellite system. It was great to be part of the first life boat safety drill and seeing all the brand new lifejackets that were purchased with the money raised from our participation (with Dave Russell) in the Great North Run. It was quite an emotional experience seeing the fulfilment of 'the promise' after so many long hard months working on the project and to know that the 'ship of smiles' was finally on her way to service in Africa.

Six months later Chris was able to go back to the ship, actually seeing it in action in the war torn nation of Liberia. Liberia is a place of desperate need and poverty on a huge scale. It is incredible to us that even the capital city doesn't have a regular electricity supply or clean piped water. Mercy Ships has committed to help Liberia long term with both it's medical needs and to assist in the re-building of the country's infrastructure in whatever way is possible.

One thing Chris commented on was the large numbers of eye patients that are being helped aboard the ship. On the Anastasis in general we were only able to operate on one eye per person due to restricted resources and such a huge demand for our help. On the Africa Mercy it is possible to restore vision in both eyes for cataract patients and with a designated eye operating theatre, about 15 surgeries are performed on eyes every day which is having a significant impact on the number of blind people in the country.



The transition of equipment and crew from the Anastasis to the new ship went fairly smoothly and, though it was sad to see the Anastasis leave Mercy Ships after 28 years of service, there were many who breathed a sigh of relief that the aged vessel had finally been retired. This year has been a triumphant one for Mercy Ships in many ways but also a hard one for the crew who have had to readjust in many ways, survive a long outreach in one of the poorest countries of the world plus deal with the loss of 2 crew, one from cerebral malaria and another who drowned whilst swimming on a local beach. We are reminded again of the sacrifice the crew make to serve on board in Africa and our responsibility to pray for their safety and protection.

We would love to hear from you!

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Our life in Texas is in comparison very comfortable! Having been so unsure about coming here, we are now so glad that God has called us here for this season whilst we have young children. We are certainly enjoying the chance for a more outdoor life. Here the weather is described in these sort of terms: 'our best chance of rain is next week on Saturday'. A lovely dry climate but at this time of year, very changeable temperatures. Stefan has enjoyed his first season playing 'soccer' and Rebekah enjoys nature walks or riding on the back seat of Vicki's bike.

We have become very murderous now - killing any creature that comes into the house and a good few poisonous spiders that we find outside too. Luckily we have had no more close encounters of the reptile kind but a friend of ours described to us how she recently found a snake in her lounge and killed it with a baking tray and a cowboy boot!

Stefan is thriving in his first year at school where he is a favourite with the boys, girls and teachers alike. Rebekah has also started preschool three mornings a week and she is known for being polite and for her desire to be the Queen when she grows up!

Vicki has been trained as a counsellor for the Pregnancy Resource Centre in Tyler - a YWAM charity which offers pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, referrals and advice plus a listening ear for girls who think they might be pregnant. In a place where medical fees are so high and in some cases abortion is seen as a method of birth control, the work of the PRC is extremely valuable and desperately needed.

It is wonderful to have more of a 'normal' family life, though we know to hold on to it lightly! We have a great church and a full social life and plenty of opportunity to serve and help in the local community as well as at Mercy Ships.

Thank you for your prayers for us and to those of you who support us financially, a double thank you - we couldn't serve with Mercy Ships without you.

Please keep in touch in the year ahead, we'd love to pray for you too! And if you ever fancy a trip to Texas, we have a place you can stay and we would give you a BIG Texan welcome for sure.

Lots of love, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

From Vicki and Chris, Stefan and Rebekah xx



It is easy to support to the work of Vicki and Chris. Please contact us if you would like to know more about donating to our work with Mercy Ships with a single gift or regularly.
You can also see our website for details.