

FRIEND SHIPS ANNUAL ACTIVITIES REPORT, DECEMBER 2006

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Dear Friends:

Thank you for allowing Friend Ships to be so very productive this year. Together, we have touched the lives of thousands of people, helped them to have a better life, come to know our Lord Jesus and experience His love.

2006

The early part of this year was spent preparing for a medical mission to Haiti and putting *Port Mercy* back together after having been hit hard

by Hurricane Rita in September 2005. At the time the hurricane occurred and for several months following, we were so busy helping the communities surrounding New Orleans who had been devastated by Hurricane Katrina and then helping our own community recovering from Rita, that we had little time to recuperate from our own losses. But early this year we were able to rebuild, repair equipment and reorganize inventory so that we were ready to respond to future needs.



Medical procedure container – exterior



Medical procedure container - interior

In the spring, we built an additional three medical procedure clinics in containers to expand our operations in the field. In May we sailed *Friend Ships Hope and Mersea* to Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Working again in coordination with our great friends at *TBN* and *Smile of a Child*, we delivered food, clothing, toys, hospital equipment and a drilling rig. The supplies were received and distributed by *St. Vincent's Handicapped School* and *Global Missions*, a network of orphanages throughout Haiti. We set up our "Super Clinic" at the *Smile of a Child* facility, provided two weeks of services, and saw thousands of patients for medical and dental needs. We also able to distribute thousands of pairs of glasses, serve a meal to patients waiting to be seen and offer ministry and a time of prayer for each of our hundreds of patients each day. The ships sailed home to *Port Mercy* in June.

Immediately following the return of the ships we prepared to host the first *Friend Ships Disaster Relief Training Session*. Almost 50 people joined us from around the country in order to learn to prepare teams to join us and be effective in providing disaster relief. Students learned about food service, first aid, fire fighting, roofing, yard clean up, ship support, emergency radio broadcasting, how to

work with the helicopter and much more. It was a productive and exciting time. Fortunately, this year, there were no hurricanes that made landfall and we did not need to call in the troops for disaster relief.

In July, as we were preparing for a December mission to Israel to supply humanitarian aid, a war broke out and we were asked to sail as soon as possible. We quickly prepared *Spirit of Grace*, completed loading and assembled a great crew. In September we sailed for Ashdod, Israel. It seemed all the hurricanes that did not make landfall were waiting to threaten *Spirit of Grace* Mid-Atlantic. We managed to avoid most of their fury, arriving in Israel early October. We spent 40 days at the Port of Ashdod and delivered thousands of tons of clothing, medical supplies, building materials, toys and furniture, much of which was used to assist the people in the north. In that area 2000 people lost their homes due to the war with Lebanon in July and August. Some goods also went to help Arab families in Bethlehem and Jericho while other goods helped new immigrants to Israel. The *Joseph Projects* distribution centers, located throughout Israel, were able to distribute 30 tons of clothing in November because of the ship's delivery. This is normally what they distribute in an entire year. And there is a still an equal supply left for 12 more months. Associated Press came to the ship and published an article about the mission that was published in thousands of papers throughout the world. *Spirit of Grace* is on her way home and is expected to arrive home around the New Year.



Supplies inside the ship's large holds

AP ARTICLE

American evangelical group arrives in Ashdod on solidarity mission

By The Associated Press

After a stormy 35-day journey at sea, a group of American evangelicals traveling on an old World War II-era cargo ship landed in Ashdod on a solidarity mission only to run aground in red tape, with long delays in unloading their cargo of clothes, toys and medical supplies.

Still, the 42-member crew was unfazed Thursday, keeping a positive, enthusiastic attitude in a colorful demonstration of the growing alliance between fundamentalist Christians and the Jewish state.

"The Bible says, 'Who blesses Israel will be blessed,'" said Don Tipton, the group's leader. "We believe that."

The "Spirit of Grace" steamed into the Israeli port of Ashdod in early October from Louisiana, flying an American flag and a huge banner reading "Jehovah" in Hebrew letters. Three weeks later, the low, gray-painted ship is still docked, its 900-ton load of goods bound for local charities stuck on board as the gears of Israeli bureaucracy slowly turn.

The band of evangelical Christians on the "Spirit of Grace" are bearing the delay the same way they sailed their weather-beaten cargo ship through three fierce storms in the Atlantic Ocean on the voyage over: with a cheerful faith that their mission is God's will.

"It's taken a bit longer than we expected, but it's given us more time to tour the country, and we're having a great time," said Sandra Tipton, Don's wife.

Julio Lieberman, the group's Israeli shipping agent, said the delay was due to paperwork that the government requires for charitable donations from abroad. "It's taken far too long, but it should be sorted out in a few days," he said. Yigal Ben-Zikry, a spokesman for the Ashdod port, said workers could

unload the ship "in half a day" as soon as government approval comes through.

The "Spirit of Grace" - formerly the U.S.S. Pembina, a 62-year-old Navy ship that saw action in World War II - is operated by Friend Ships, a foundation run by the Tiptons, born-again Christians originally from Beverly Hills. The group owns four other ships, as well as landing craft and a helicopter, all based in Lake Charles, Louisiana, at a facility that the group has dubbed Port Mercy.

Like the "Spirit of Grace," the vessels are staffed entirely by volunteers and used to deliver supplies donated by Christians to disaster-struck countries around the world.

But the mission to Israel is different.

"This is not aid, it's an expression of friendship and love," Don Tipton said. The members of his crew, he said, like many other evangelical Christians, see supporting Israel as a divine commandment. They were further spurred on by the recent war in Lebanon, he said.

"After the war, we saw that Lebanon was getting lots of aid and friendship, and I thought, hey, they're not the ones who just got mugged," Tipton said. He had preparations for this journey, which had been planned before fighting broke out, sped up.

The voyage of the "Spirit of Grace" reflects the growing alliance between American evangelicals and Israel, a relationship which has seen evangelical Christians become more vocal politically and more generous financially in their support of the Jewish state.

"We love and admire Israel - we tell our congressmen and senators this, and we stand behind Bush," said Tipton, 62. "We won't let anything happen to Israel."

Tipton's crew is a diverse group. Its oldest member is the chief engineer, Wally Barber of Seattle, 83. Its youngest is Ruth Larson, four months old, who came along with her parents.

Serving on the ship is "a calling," Lloyd Williams, a white-bearded veteran sailor from Durban, South Africa, said over the noise of the engine room. Williams wore a Star of David on a pendant around his neck.

Merri Uddin, originally from Detroit, was working in a Louisiana casino until a hurricane destroyed it last year. "It was a blessing," Uddin says, because the loss of her job led her to sign up with the "Spirit of Grace." Kristin Boettcher of Des Moines was in college when, she said, "The Lord got ahold of my life," and she found her way to the ship. Jim Fotia, a Californian with long hair and a beard, said he joined the trip because he "felt the call" to come to Israel. "I'm amazed at how much it's like southern California," Fotia said.

Despite the bureaucratic foul-ups that have kept their charitable cargo stuck on board, the Christian sailors said they've been warmly received at this busy port, where their vintage vessel, its earnest crew and its blue-and-white "Jehovah" banner stand out among huge international cargo ships, grimy tankers and Israeli naval craft. Workers have invited them for dinner in the port's cafeteria, and the port has waived some of its usual tariffs, Donald Tipton said.

"We had to be nice to these people," port spokesman Yigal Ben-Zikry said, "they're more Zionist than any Israelis I know."

Throughout the year, we continued to make improvements to *Port Mercy* which included building warehouse sheds, installing RV park systems, and much clean up and organizing. We sent out humanitarian aid shipments by commercial means to Haiti, Jamaica and Guatemala and continued to provide goods to local churches to help the recovering communities.

Friend Ships Los Angeles continued to collect and distribute food to needy families each week. We loaded containers of equipment and supplies for ministries in the Philippines. We transferred numerous boxcars and truckloads of goods from the West Coast to *Port Mercy*.

Friend Ships International in Roatán, Honduras hosted 50 church conferences this year and saw many people come to Jesus. We distributed commodities and provided tarp roofs for many needy households.

2007



Port Mercy from a satellite

In 2007 we hope to have a very productive year. Here is what we have planned:

- Care and maintenance to our home base, *Port Mercy* and our ships. *Port Mercy* is very much in need of additional warehouse space and a loading dock for the ships. We also have a large building on the grounds that we are hoping to rebuild with classrooms, housing, offices and a dining area. We are also planning to complete an outdoor crew café.
- Stand-by for disaster relief during the June to November hurricane season of 2007.

- Missions to Honduras and Haiti that will include medical services and distribution of humanitarian aid.
- Building of several more medical procedure clinics in coordination with *Smile of a Child* that will be placed at *TBN* stations in many poor countries for the benefit of the local impoverished community.
- We also hope to start a relief missions training program for young people.

Would you like to help?

Friend Ships has ongoing needs for:

Prayer - Join “Special Forces”, our team of prayer warriors.

Crew - long and short term individuals and teams.

Finances - to support general operations and help purchase *Port Mercy*.

Cargo - see website or request a brochure on how you can pack boxes of supplies to be shipped.

Port Mercy Campaign:

If you would like to help us purchase our home base, *Port Mercy*, please mark your gift “Port Mercy”. We are collecting funds in order to meet a balloon payment of \$450,000.00 we have coming up in early 2008. For about 50 cents a square foot we can permanently own this invaluable property in Lake Charles, LA where we house our ships and crew, have warehousing and administrative headquarters.

FOR THOSE WHO STAND BEHIND THE WORK HERE AT FRIEND SHIPS, EITHER BY JOINING US, GIVING OR PRAYING, REMEMBER THAT YOUR HANDS PUSH US TOWARDS THE MARK. YOUR PRINTS ARE FOREVER ON THE LORD'S WORK HERE AS IT GOES FORTH AROUND THE WORLD, SHOWING BY YOUR ACTIONS, WHO JESUS IS AND HOW MUCH HE LOVES THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD.

