

Friend Ships October 2005 Activities Report

FRIEND SHIPS at PORT MERCY, 1019 North First Avenue, Lake Charles, LA 70601

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Dear Friends:

We have so much to share with you this month that it will be difficult to contain it in one brief report. When last we wrote, [Hurricane Katrina](#) had just devastated the Gulf and Friend Ships had begun to respond in the New Orleans area. Our helicopter flew in to assess the situation. We then sailed both disaster relief ships *Hope* and *Mersea* to Gretna on the west bank of the Mississippi, just across the river from downtown New Orleans and began to help the people there. Our team in Los Angeles began to collect and ship us load after load of food and other needed items.



People from around the country sent supplies. This work still continues as we cook meals, distribute goods, remove fallen trees, tarp roofs and offer spiritual support to thousands of people. On September 24th, [Hurricane Rita](#) made landfall on the Texas-Louisiana border. The eastern wall of the storm and some of the most powerful winds crossed over our home port in Lake Charles. As Rita approached, we evacuated most of

our staff to *Hope* and *Mersea*, where they could carry on the outreach to Katrina victims. A small group of us stayed at **Port Mercy** to watch over the ships and facility, as best we could, while preparing to help the Lake Charles community in the aftermath of the storm. Rita was ferocious and we did receive damage. One of the ships broke loose and it was hours before the storm calmed enough to get her back to the dock. Some of our buildings and cargo were damaged but thanks to God there is no damage to the ships and nothing ashore that is not repairable.

The Lake Charles community needed immediate help as people, many elderly, sat in their damaged homes, badly shaken by the storm, with no power or water (no lights, fans, refrigerator, etc.) and no access to food or supplies while enduring 90 degree heat and heavy humidity. Our outpost in

Gretna began sending trucks of supplies and staff right away. We set up a hot meals station at Port Mercy and began to go door to door to find those who needed help. This work continues to this date as we provide tarp for roofing, chain saw and roofing services, distribution of needed items and spiritual support. We estimate that we have given out more than 19 miles of tarp from Port Mercy, if laid out end to end. For two weeks we offered medical services and filled medication needs without charge. Thanks to Blessings for Obedience, we are operating an emergency broadcast radio station both from *Hope* and from *Spirit*, on 107.9 FM. [Radio Hope](#) and [Radio Mercy](#) are both streamed on the internet for worldwide broadcast on our website.



Currently, our emphasis is on the downtown area of **New Orleans**. We've set up a tent and are working with other organizations to reach out to the community and workers who are coming in to help restore the city. We are

having church, serving three hot meals a day and distributing clothes and other goods. Many of the workers that came to help with the cleanup effort left home with nothing but a few sets of clothes because they were in a rush to get here. They are very thankful for the clothing (*especially underwear!*) and hot meals our team is providing. One of them, an Assistant Fire Chief in central Illinois, told me, "I don't know what we would do without you people here. We are not getting paid yet and we have no money to buy food." This gives us the opportunity to tell them that God knows their need and cares for them. Then we can point to the Bread of Life, Jesus, who is the bread that never ceases to fill them up. Groups of volunteers are leading worship time with music in the tent at every meal. Different people are sharing the Gospel, along with other encouraging words from the Bible. Jesus is being exalted in the streets of New Orleans, people are fed, needs are met. All of it is happening because thousands of Christians all over this country are saying "Yes!" to God and obeying the simple command of Jesus to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Our team at Port Mercy continues to send out chain saw teams, provide temporary roofing, distribute goods serve hot meals and minister spiritually to the community of Lake Charles.

This has been an incredibly intense time for us and for the country. We have been richly blessed by you, our friends who have provided work teams, individual volunteers, finances, goods and prayer. So much has been accomplished and continues to be accomplished by this great team effort. Thousands of people have been touched by the love of God and their lives will be forever changed. There are countless

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stories of people in their homes, desperate and without hope, praying for God to help them when our team knocks on the door and says "What can we do for you? No charge, from Jesus with love." There is no way to explain to you the effect this has on the spirits and souls of these beautiful people.

We received so many precious donations including one that touched us deeply from a paraplegic man who receives \$40 a month for his support. He sent \$25 of his September funds to us to help Katrina victims. On the field, we have ministered to people in the mafia, some just let out of jail because of the hurricane and to missionaries and pastors, just as badly affected by these devastating hurricanes.



We have experienced so much divine intervention, it would fill a book! The following excerpt, taken from an email written by a member of the security staff assigned to protect us during the unstable initial time in

Gretna, demonstrates how God provides for our safety and security: "I'm one of the personal protection specialists who volunteered to fly down to Gretna, become sworn in as local law enforcement and do whatever we could do to help. . . When word came from the mayors office that they were going to get the *M/V Hope* to come and dock, they turned to us to go do the advance work and secure the site. This was right up our alley! After the "Big Pink Warehouse" was chosen, we moved in the night before the *Hope* arrived to secure it. There were a lot of long, hot day's on the dock, the gate, outlying observation posts, etc. We had to improvise and adapt quite a bit and be ready to deal with people who would shoot at the electrical workers and police not very far from our position. After the first night, we ran into the SWAT team from West Virginia. They had completed a mission and were looking for an assignment. We needed a team in camo with night vision to work nights. It was perfect. We then worked days, they worked nights. I have to tell you what a rewarding experience it was. The crew of the *M/V Hope* and the ALERT crews were so professional and kind, it was a joy. The hot cup of fresh gumbo at just the right time, or a genuine "how are you" were great. . . After the National Guard took over our positions, we did a lot of protective service details taking officials to many locations, patrolling with the police, etc. Everyone who worked on the dock was very proud that we were able to secure that site and protect the *M/V Hope* and crew because of the important work you folks were doing. Who am I to argue with why some of the top protective personnel in the country were summoned to all go to a little dock on the Mississippi to protect some of the most professional and effective relief workers I've had the pleasure of working with. It must have

been by God's hand. Keep up the good work. You are all in my prayers."



October 2nd, 2005 marked the 20th anniversary since the day that our first ship, *Spirit*, was donated to Friend Ships. We didn't have time to celebrate this year but thought it was a good way to mark this occasion, by working full force in two locations to advance the Kingdom of our God by showing His love to people in need.

The team in **Roatán, Honduras** has carried on with hosting Christian training seminars, roofing homes and teaching art school. As this letter goes to print, the team is cleaning up after being deluged with torrential rain and wind from Hurricane Wilma. Our staff there is fine and our buildings withstood the storm however a lot of trees were lost.

The awesome crew in **Los Angeles** found time to load a 40 foot sea container full of school equipment and supplies for a great ministry in Nigeria that is providing Christian education to poor children.



This month, we were blessed with the gift of an incredible new truck and trailer for disaster relief work (picture to the left). We'll tell you more about that next month.

Well friends, when God raised us up to respond to needs, we had no idea how active we would need to be at times in our own great nation. It is a privilege to serve the Lord and be able to reach out with His love in times such as this. **THANK YOU FOR STANDING WITH US!** An army moves on its supply line and for us, that is YOU! We appreciate you more than you know.

1 John 3:17-18 "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in Him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."

If you would like to be involved with supporting Friend Ships programs, we have ongoing needs for:

Crew - [long and short term individuals and teams.](#)

Finances - [to support general operations.](#)

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

Prayer - [Join "Special Forces", our team of prayer warriors.](#)