All hands on deck
Who is Mercy Ships

Mercy Ships is a faith-based international development organization that deploys hospital ships to some of the poorest countries in the world, delivering vital, free healthcare to people in desperate need.

Mercy Ships works closely with each host nation to improve the way healthcare is delivered across the country through medical capacity building programs — training and mentoring local medical staff and renovating hospitals and clinics for use after Mercy Ships complete our field service.

Globally, five billion people have no access to safe and affordable surgery when they need it.

Since 1978...

Mercy Ships has worked in more than 56 countries, providing services valued at over $1.6 billion that have directly benefited more than 2.8 million people. We have also trained 44,300 local professionals in their areas of expertise to leave a legacy that lasts.

Mission

Mercy Ships follows the 2,000-year-old model of Jesus, bringing hope and healing to the world’s forgotten poor.

Vision

Mercy Ships uses hospital ships to transform individuals and serve nations one at a time.

Values

Following the model of Jesus, we seek to:
- Love God.
- Love and serve others.
- Be people of integrity.
- Strive for excellence in all we say and do.

Impact

In 1990, Mercy Ships turned attention to sub-Saharan Africa where nearly 100% of the population lacks access to safe, affordable, and timely surgery. Since then, Mercy Ships has conducted 47 field services in 14 African countries, most of which are ranked by the United Nations Development Index as the least developed in the world.
**A New Season Awaits**

It has been a busy year, and we have accomplished many significant things for the Kingdom of God. Thousands of people have been healed, and lives have been changed. We are humbled by what God has done as we have served the people of Guinea and Senegal; yet we know none of it would be possible without the generosity of so many people coming together from all over the world to support the Mercy Ships mission.

As CEO of Mercy Ships, I want to personally thank each of our donors and volunteers for providing your gifts so that we can continue to provide hope and healing for the forgotten poor. We do not take this for granted and realize that it is through your generosity that we are able to serve thousands of people every year. We also know we must be good stewards of your gifts as resources entrusted to us to advance His Kingdom.

With every passing day, we come closer to a new era of hope and healing at Mercy Ships. The upcoming launch of our new ship, the Global Mercy, will more than double our capacity to bring life-changing surgical interventions and medical capacity building training to the countries we serve. We are looking at this new season, praying that God will be glorified in all we do as we continue the mission of hope and healing.

There is significant change ahead for Mercy Ships as we prepare to become a two-ship fleet. We are praying for the resources, to accomplish more than we can imagine for the Kingdom of God. With this upcoming milestone, we ask that you continue to join us in prayer for the future. We pray for God’s wisdom and guidance with Mercy Ships and the mission that He called us to over 40 years ago.

**Continuing to Journey Forward**

Dear Friends,

When I think about the dream that began so long ago, I am amazed at all that has been accomplished over the last 42 years. From Don and Deyon Stephens’ dream in 1978 of bringing quality medical services to people in remote areas, to the upcoming completion of our first-ever custom-built hospital ship, the Global Mercy, Mercy Ships has continued to grow exponentially.

And we have so much to be thankful for this year! From completing our fifth field service in Guinea, to the start of our time in Senegal, so many lives have been changed and relationships restored. But none of these wonderful accomplishments would be possible without those dedicated to fulfilling our mission — of bringing hope and healing to the forgotten poor.

As you read through the 2019 Annual Report, you will see how your dedicated support has impacted so many — those like baby Saliou whose cleft lip made him an outcast, or the young mother Adama, whose cataracts threatened to keep the sight of her infant twins hidden from her forever.

These are just two of the many lives changed because of people like you! I wanted to take the time to thank you, on behalf of our International Board of Directors, staff, and crew, for partnering with us. And while we are excited about all that has been accomplished, we know there is still much to do. The journey is far from over! Thank you for faithfully working to see the world changed, one life at a time.

Tom Stogner,
Chief Executive Officer
Adama’s Story
From Darkness To Light

Adama was five months pregnant when the world around her started to flicker and fade. Soon, all she could see were shadows and shapes as clouded, disc-like cataracts developed in her eyes. “Maybe it will clear up after I give birth,” she told herself, hoping that the loss of sight was somehow linked to her pregnancy.

But once she’d delivered her twin babies, a boy and a girl, 30-year-old Adama had to face the truth. She was blind. She would never see the faces of her beautiful babies and without access to safe, affordable surgery, she had little hope of restoring her vision.

“I thought this would last forever; that I would never know what they looked like. I was very desperate,” Adama said. “I didn’t have any hope.”

The twins were six months old, their faces still a mystery to their mother, when Mercy Ships arrived.

Adama’s surgery took about 20 minutes, but that was all it took to restore her future. When it was time for Adama’s patch to come off, she kept her eyes closed for a few moments. Would her sight be fully restored? Had the surgery worked?

Gradually, she opened her eyes. A smile spread across her face as she realized she was seeing the world again for the first time in almost a year! Her family members, gathered nearby, were some of the first people to welcome Adama back into the world of the seeing.

“When I die and go to paradise and meet my own people there… that’s what the moment was like,” she said. Immediately, she reached for her twins, drinking in the details of their faces for the first time. Tiny noses, long eyelashes, round cheeks; Adama cradled them both in her arms at the same time, eyes dancing between the two, and exclaimed,

“I never expected that my babies would be so beautiful.”

The cataract surgery Adama received with Mercy Ships took less than half an hour, but the impact of her restored sight will reverberate throughout the rest of her life. There will be countless moments where Adama rejoices because of the ability to see again — but it’s hard to imagine a moment more meaningful than a mother’s patient love being rewarded with the sight of her children for the first time.

**Images:** Left and Top Right: Adama seeing her children after surgery restored her sight. Bottom Right: Founder, Don Stephens onboard the Africa Mercy.
Why Africa?

The Need

The Lancet Commission on Global Surgery identifies that more than 18 million people die each year from a lack of safe surgery.

In addition, billions of people experience chronic pain, financial catastrophe, and social stigma because of injuries, ailments, and disfigurements that surgery could fix.

In sub-Saharan Africa, over 93% of the population live without access to timely, safe, affordable surgery. In Africa, we can help the greatest number of people living near ports in some of the world’s poorest countries.

There is an urgent need for significant growth in surgical capacity and training in developing nations. Mercy Ships is committed to increasing our own surgical and training capacity and to raising awareness of the need for, and impact of, surgery in developing countries.

Over 93% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa does not have access to safe, affordable surgery.

The Solution

Mercy Ships takes a two-pronged approach to improve healthcare systems in the countries we partner with:

1. Direct Medical Services: We reduce the immediate backlog of surgical patients through direct surgical provision onboard a hospital ship.

2. Medical Capacity Building: Strengthening our host nation’s healthcare system through training, infrastructure, and mentoring.

Mercy Ships is committed to raising awareness of the extraordinary level of unmet need in global surgery, and to encourage an active and informed response to it. We have achieved much in our 40 year history, but are dedicated to doing more. Our focus is firmly on the future and fulfilling our mission of bringing hope and healing to those in need.

Why Hospital Ships?

More than 40% of the world’s population lives within 100 miles of a coast — which is why Mercy Ships uses modern hospital ships to bring world-class volunteer medical professionals directly to the places they’re needed most.

Our ships are the most efficient way to bring a state-of-the-art hospital to regions where clean water, electricity, and medical facilities and personnel are limited or non-existent. Instead of trying to build the facilities we need to bring life-changing surgeries, we can provide a safe, stable, fully outfitted hospital ship which provides the best platform for our two-pronged approach.

Our Volunteers

The Hands on Deck

It takes a dedicated crew with different skills and talents to run a hospital ship. Over 1,000 volunteers, from over 50 nations serve onboard the Africa Mercy every year.

With a new ship on the horizon we need all hands on deck. Together we will do more.

Volunteers serving with Mercy Ships raise their own finances to serve onboard. This means that every dollar Mercy Ships receives in funding is complemented by contributed gifts-in-kind and services, enabling Mercy Ships to deliver medical and development services for a fraction of the usual cost.

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Committed to Africa

Recognizing that change is best achieved through building deep partnerships, our Africa Bureau’s central goal is to develop and strengthen relationships in the African nations with whom we partner.

What attracted you to Mercy Ships? — I met Mercy Ships for the first time in Lomé, Togo in 2011. I was the WHO representative to the Republic of Togo and I had the opportunity to go onboard the Mercy Ships floating hospital, the Africa Mercy. As a doctor and public health specialist working to make Africa healthier, I was impressed by the work, and I established a solid collaboration with Mercy Ships based on my experience and advice; I was able to support the charity’s operations in Africa.

Then in 2016, the Mercy Ships International Board appointed me as Africa Ambassador for Mercy Ships, with the responsibility of cultivating relationships across the African continent. Once retired from the United Nations I became the Director of the Mercy Ships Africa Bureau.

I have learned so many things from Africa and the African people while fighting the HIV/AIDS epidemic on the continent. In Africa, we are still so fragile. I believe in Africa and I’m totally engaged in making my contribution to the betterment of the African people. Mercy Ships shares my belief in, and commitment to, Africa’s healing and development.

How did setting up a base in West Africa impact the work of Mercy Ships? — By setting up a base in Cotonou in the Republic of Benin, Mercy Ships has fulfilled the missing face of the organization on the continent, proving its ongoing commitment to Africa and its peoples. Mercy Ships belongs to the African countries we serve and their peoples.

The Africa Bureau was established in October 2016. We conduct and facilitate negotiations, sign and follow up protocol collaboration agreements with African governments, support Mercy Ships programs, and improve the communication, networking and advocacy to better involve African nations and the people of Africa.

How do you see the work of Mercy Ships contributing to the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa? — The UN’s SDG N°3, endorsed by the international community, aims to ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all people at all ages. To achieve this goal in Africa we need to build strong and resilient healthcare systems to provide universal health coverage. This is what Mercy Ships is working towards.

Mercy Ships programs provide free surgeries, training of local healthcare professionals, and medical capacity building. These programs make a solid contribution to two of the UN’s six building blocks of health systems (health workforce and healthcare service delivery).

Going forward, Mercy Ships efforts should continue to be sustained in a holistic manner with the full participation of the African communities, African health professionals, and health sector partners in a coordinated manner because we can only achieve the SDG N°3 if we work together with the local governments in the driving seat. I also believe that by strategically focusing on countries with both need and opportunity, we can make a big contribution towards achieving the SDG N°3. These strategic countries should host hospital ships three times in the next 10 years to make a real impact.

“I believe in Africa and I’m totally engaged in making my contribution to the betterment of the African people.”
— Dr. Pierre M’Pele

How does Mercy Ships continue to develop and cultivate relationships with African partners? — We have two major partners in African nations: the government and the people. Our relationships with our partners are strong.

We align our support to the strategic development of African governments and their vision, as in Liberia with the “Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development” and in Senegal, with the “Plan for an Emerging Senegal.” We are always invited by the host nation and we work under the leadership of the national government in a win-win collaboration for the benefit of the people — a true partnership with the African people to achieve more together.

What is the perception of Mercy Ships and its impact from your base in Africa? — We are working in a challenging and changing Africa. To ensure we are as effective as possible we adapt our strategy with the country we are serving as we work to transform the lives of the people and strengthen healthcare systems.

Mercy Ships keeps building its partnership with African countries in line with our values — integrity, excellence, love God as we love and serve others. We are viewed as a committed and long-term partner by our brothers and sisters on the continent of Africa.

To conclude, I would say, in Africa we are all part of Mercy Ships because we are working towards the same goals, together.

Dr. M’Pele is the director of our Africa Bureau in Benin. Before joining Mercy Ships he worked with the World Health Organization (WHO) and led the UNAIDS Inter-country Technical Support Team for West and Central Africa.
A Closer Look at 2019

Thanks to the many hands on deck, lives were transformed and nations impacted!

As per the cycle of field services over a calendar year, our hospital ship, the Africa Mercy spent the first half of 2019 completing up our field service in the nation of Guinea, and serving in the nation of Senegal for the last portion of the year. During these months, we were able to provide surgeries, dental care, and various types of healthcare training to the people of these nations, bringing hope and healing, and striving to leave an impact.

Our surgical specialties are tailored to meet the needs of the people we serve — people who most likely would never have access to, or be able to afford reliable, healthcare or surgery.

In addition to providing life-transforming surgeries and medical care, our professional medical volunteers provide training and mentoring programs to local medical professionals. Safe surgery practices, neonatal resuscitation, palliative care, trauma care, and pain management are some of the educational programs provided which aim to teach and improve existing skills in ways that are practical, relevant, and sustainable.

Our surgical specialties are tailored to meet the needs of the people we serve.
Mercy Ships began the second half of our 10-month field service to the beautiful country of Guinea in January of 2019.

During our time there, Mercy Ships offered direct medical services and medical capacity building programs with the support of the Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene and other local partners. These services not only benefited thousands of individuals directly but also helped to boost national healthcare development within the entire nation.

Our surgical and medical interventions strive to reduce disability, prevent early death, and restore hope in areas where healthcare is limited or unattainable.

While serving in Guinea, Mercy Ships celebrated a significant milestone — the completion of the 100,000th surgical procedure onboard the Africa Mercy. The surgery, a cleft lip repair, was performed on a 7-month-old child who traveled with her mother nearly 200 miles in hope of finding healing.

During our time there, Mercy Ships identified and renovated the Boulbinet Health Center in Conakry as the site for the HOPE (Hospital Out-Patient Extension) center. At the conclusion of our time of service in Guinea, the facility was returned to the government for further use. Renovations were also made at the Odonto-Stomato de la Faculté de Médecine de L’Université Gamal, Guinea’s only dental school. The school was utilized as a dental clinic during our field service and was returned fully restored and equipped following our departure. Over 10,000 individual patients were direct beneficiaries of our projects during the Guinea field service. We are grateful to the many partners who joined with us to provide hope and healing to those in need in Guinea.

**CREW SPOTLIGHT**

Hardworking Penda served as a lab technician onboard the Africa Mercy during our field service in Dakar, Senegal.

Penda spent her time onboard working in the radiology department where she had the opportunity to learn more about imaging, radiology, and the equipment — knowledge that will help her further her career.

During her time with Mercy Ships, Penda said she enjoyed learning about cases she never knew existed and witnessing the impact that Mercy Ships has on patients and their caregivers.

“It feels so good to see how happy and thankful they are,” she said. “You’re going to stay in their mind forever because you are part of the process of something that changed their life.”

**Food for Life**

Several hours northeast of Conakry, Guinea is the Fabik farm — a rare oasis of green amidst a desert of dry and dusty fields. Among the freshly planted rows of corn and lettuce, there’s a group hard at work planting, watering, and weeding.

This group of 32 Guinean men and women are the participants of the Mercy Ships Food for Life program, gathered to learn the ins and outs of nutrition, crop production, and packaging and organic agriculture. They were also taught how to train others, with the goal of returning to their communities and continuing the education program long after they graduate.

“Mercy Ships as a surgery ship is investing in farming because we recognize that in order to have good health you need to have good nutrition — and for good nutrition to be effective, you need to have safe food,” Agricultural Program Manager Eliphaz Essah said. “To do that, we need to get the best knowledge of how to produce safe food; and that’s why [the Food for Life program] is here.”

Many conditions on the ship — such as orthopedic cases — are often linked to malnutrition. By educating a group of innovative and socially-minded locals, the goal is to see a ripple effect in each nation as they return to their homes and teach others what they’ve learned.

Among the 32 graduates from this year’s program was Marie-Louise Kantabadouno, a Guinean NGO worker, who came highly recommended by her organization and became a stand-out student.

After graduating, Marie Louise immediately jumped into action. Along with two other course participants, she now travels to villages across the region, teaching women nutritional basics, food production techniques, and packaging methods, so that they can store or sell their food more efficiently. The three also conducted an interactive workshop in local school classroom, and gave the children nutritious food that the volunteers had grown themselves during the course.

“I learned from this training that children are malnourished because there is a lack of means and a lack of education of their parents in the area of agriculture,” Marie-Louise said. “Their parents are all farmers, but they do not have any experience. I’ll now have the chance to talk to families and help them evolve in the field of agro-ecology, the association of cultures, the rotation of cultures and mulching and the use of compost to abandon chemical products.

“Without the partnership of local NGOs and workers, the Food for Life course wouldn’t be possible. It’s a medley of different organizations, goals, and methods — and a beautiful symbol of the successful way in which these can all work together to reach a common goal,” Marie-Louise concluded.
Sky-High Dreams for Sema
Sema's Story

For as long as he can remember, 9-year-old Sema watched the planes fly in and out of the airport near his home in Guinea. He'd hear the familiar rumble overhead and see the aircraft flying through the sky — and he'd dream about his future.

“I want to be a plane driver when I grow up because I love discovering new places. I want to go everywhere,” Sema said. “I will go to school first to learn how to be a plane driver, and then I'll be able to travel everywhere.”

For most of Sema's childhood, however, his dreams have felt compromised by the sharp curves of his legs.

This orthopedic condition, commonly called “bowed legs,” often begins at a young age as the result of malnutrition. In Sema's case, it began when he was just a toddler, and his legs continued to grow more severely bent the older he got.

Sema is being raised by his grandmother, Aminata, who took him and his three older siblings in when his mother died just days after he was born. When they first noticed Sema's legs bending, Aminata tried to tell herself he'd grow out of it on his own.

Now it's easier for Sema to walk straight and tall — especially with the added three inches of height his surgery has given him.

“Some kids start walking with their legs far apart… we thought it would get better over time,” she said. But once Sema turned four, the family had to accept that this was their reality.

Aminata, who sells spices and peppers at the local market, has had difficulty providing for the 10 people living in her home, so the thought of paying for medical care for Sema was out of the question.

“I didn't even want to take him to the doctor to get looked at — I knew they would only tell me a price that was too big,” she said. “There was no way we could pay for anything. It made me so sad. When you have children and grandchildren, you would do anything for them… but I couldn't do a thing for him; I had to put my heart to God.”

God answered Aminata's patient prayers in the form of a hospital ship visiting with volunteer crew from around the world. Sema came onboard the Africa Mercy for a pediatric orthopedic surgery, which would straighten his legs and help them to heal through regular post-op care and physiotherapy sessions.

Before surgery, Sema was subdued and quiet.

“My legs were bowed; my friends' legs were straight,” Sema said. “Everywhere I went, people used to laugh. They'd say ‘Open legs, open legs.’”

But during his months in the hospital wards and in the rehab tent, Sema became the life of the party. He was particularly beloved by the team of volunteer physiotherapists who would play and dance with the young boy.

“People were playing with him like they'd known him for a long time,” Aminata said. “When we went on the ship, there was only happiness — we were treated like a queen and king,” Aminata said.

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After several months, Sema was able to return home to his community. Due to the severity of his condition, his legs aren't perfectly straight, but they hint that there's a story to be told. With continued proper nutrition and adherence to Sema's rehab exercises, there's hope that his legs will continue to grow straighter as he grows up. Now, it's easier for Sema to walk straight and tall — especially with the added eight centimeters of height that his surgery has given him!

Sema's grandmother believes his future looks brighter than ever, saying, “Now, if he goes to school, anything is possible.”

Sema’s future has been restored and now he can chase his dream of becoming a pilot. A world of discovery is now open to him.
Aliou's Story
A life transformed

A fire left young Aliou with third-degree burns on his right arm. With limited access to proper medical care, his arm contracted, eventually becoming stuck at a 90-degree angle. This tragedy brought Aliou excruciating pain and stole his ability to write. For his grandmother, Bintou, seeing her grandson go to school was a priority, but more importantly, she was determined to find healing for him.

One day, Bintou heard exciting news on the radio. An organization called Mercy Ships was coming to the port of Dakar to bring hope and healing to the people of Senegal. She embarked on the four-hour journey to her nation's capital to bring her grandson to the hospital ship that would straighten his arm.

The actual surgery was only the first step in Aliou's journey to healing. Following the operation, Aliou underwent weeks of physical therapy to rehabilitate the motion in his arm — a critical step to ensure that the work done in the OR would last a lifetime.

When Bintou saw Aliou healed, she was brimming with joy and gratitude.

"Mercy Ships opened the big door to Aliou’s future," she said. "Only God can pay them back because I cannot — it’s too much."

The Africa Mercy is like a floating city, a hospital ship full of dedicated volunteers with skill sets ranging from the medical field to administration. For volunteer Human Resources Director Whitney, serving onboard was a chance to grow in her career while helping to bring hope and healing to those in need.

"It’s a blessing to be able to utilize my professional skills in an environment like this," Whitney shared. "It’s rewarding knowing that God has been preparing me for this role long before I ever applied!"

Part of her role is to help guide the hundreds of volunteers who serve onboard the Africa Mercy. Because volunteers come from around the world, Whitney has had the opportunity to learn more about different cultures and personalities.

"I’ve learned that prior to coming to Mercy Ships, I had only been exposed to a limited portion of the world," she said. "Now, I challenge myself to constantly seek to understand. I try to go into each interaction with a listening ear."

Whether performing surgery to remove a disfiguring tumor, cleaning the deck, transporting patients, or working in an office setting, our crew makes a difference in the lives of struggling people every day they serve.

“When you’re onboard, you get to see tangible examples of the hope and healing our patients’ experience,” Whitney shared. “It’s a constant reminder of the ‘why’ behind my time onboard!”

The President of Senegal, Macky Sall, requested that Mercy Ships focus on the needs of patients both in the capital and interior regions of Senegal. This is the second time that a Mercy Ship has visited Senegal, and while the country has a reasonably robust healthcare system in Dakar, many of its rural population lack access to healthcare.

During the first half of our field service to Senegal, the Mercy Ships volunteer teams provided more than 500 free surgical procedures, which impacted 495 patients. Mercy Ships volunteers were also able to treat over 3,000 dental patients and train more than 830 local healthcare professionals.

Two buildings were renovated in Senegal: a building in Dakar which served as the Mercy Ships HOPE (Hospital Out Patient Extension) Center, and Sangalkam Dental Clinic, which was used by our volunteer dental team. At the end of the field service in 2020, both facilities and all new equipment will be returned to the local healthcare system. During our time of service in Senegal, 75% of our patients came from the 13 interior regions.

The Africa Mercy arrived in Senegal in August, 2019, in the culmination of two years of collaborative planning in support of the nation’s “Plan for an Emerging Senegal” goals. Senegal has made great strides in providing the necessary medical care for its people, and Mercy Ships is honored to be a part of their plan.
An Unshakable Smile
Saliou’s Story

Saliou was too young to realize that he was different. At 2 years old, the little boy had no idea that his cleft lip set him apart from the other children. Blissfully unaware, the condition had no damper on Saliou’s personality, which brought joy to everyone he met.

While some might view Saliou’s condition as a reason to feel shame — especially in West Africa where the lack of medical access can cause a person to live with the defect for a lifetime — Saliou’s grandmother, Ndiane, refused to let his condition hinder her love. “He’s so handsome,” she said while holding his photo.

Despite her admiration for Saliou, Ndiane still hoped that he wouldn’t have to grow up with a cleft lip which, she worried would cause him to become an outcast when he was older.

“If he didn’t get surgery, he would be different from the other children,” she said.

Sadly, it is often the case that people suffering with visible conditions, like cleft-lip, are ostracized from their communities, mocked, and shunned.

Saliou’s family didn’t have the means to find healing for him. With minimal access to safe, affordable surgery, Ndiane resorted to the only thing she could do — she prayed for a miracle. She held on to the hope that one day, her sweet Saliou would be healed. After two years of waiting on a miracle, Ndiane was thrilled to hear about a hospital ship that was docked in the capital city of Senegal. This devoted grandmother traveled 12 hours to bring Saliou to the Africa Mercy for a surgery that would change his life forever. “When I heard about the ship’s arrival, I was relieved,” she said. “Then, I made the decision to stop everything and bring him because this will impact his future!”

Ndaine’s heart swelled with joy and gratitude after Saliou’s operation — her grandson was finally healed!

A couple of hours was all it took to return Saliou’s future to the young boy. Thanks to your support, Saliou will never have to experience the pain and suffering of an outcast. Now the young boy’s future looks brighter than ever.

“I’m giving thanks to God and the people at Mercy Ships,” Ndaine said. “I didn’t have anywhere to get surgery for Saliou…”
Imagine the pain of a parent who has no choice but to watch as their child suffers from a preventable disease. Or, the distress a woman might face after being rejected by her loved ones and community because of a painful condition. For more than five billion people around the world, this is the life they are forced to endure simply because they lack access to safe, timely medical care.

This staggering statistic has been the driving force for the Mercy Ships mission since 1978. Over the last 40 years, Mercy Ships has worked alongside our supporters and dedicated volunteers to provide life-changing surgical care and medical training through our fully equipped hospital ships.

The Mercy Ships story began with a dream by our founders Don and Deyon Stephens and a 1953-built Italian cruise liner, formerly known as the Victoria. Mercy Ships acquired this ship in 1978 and converted it into our very first mobile hospital.

Renamed the Anastasis (meaning “Resurrection” in Greek), the ship sailed the high seas for 29 years, during which time an estimated 25,000 volunteer crew members served onboard.

In 1983, Mercy Ships acquired two additions to the fleet: the Norwegian ferry known as the Polarys became the second hospital ship when she was deployed as the Caribbean Mercy, and spent 12 busy years in Central America and the Caribbean Basin, visiting 137 ports in 13 countries before her 2006 retirement.

Also in 1983, the former Newfoundland coastal ferry, Petite Forte, found new life as the Good Samaritan, serving the Caribbean as well as Central and South America.

In 1994 she was renamed the Island Mercy and redeployed to the South Pacific where she served 24 developing countries until being retired in 2001.

Our current ship, the Africa Mercy is so large that it is possible to fit all our previous ships inside it with room to spare! The ship’s first field service was in Liberia and it has now been bringing hope and healing to the world’s forgotten poor for over a decade.

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From the Anastasis to the Africa Mercy, our hospital ships have helped impact over 2.8 million lives around the world by providing safe, clean environments for life-changing surgical care and training.
The Next Steps
Transforming lives in Africa

Mercy Ships is committed to increasing our own surgical and training capacity. From the launch of our current vessel, the Africa Mercy, in 2007, we had plans to increase our capacity by adding a new, bigger ship capable of bringing even more hope and healing to those in need.

In response to the critical need for safe and accessible medical care, Mercy Ships commissioned the construction of the world’s first purpose-built charity hospital ship — the Global Mercy. The design of the new ship incorporates more than 40 years of our experience, crew feedback, and learning. Using the latest technology for crew safety and security, the Global Mercy will provide accommodation for 641 people, including the crew and patients.

Once the fully funded construction of the Global Mercy is completed, the ship will join our fleet and more than double our surgical and training capacity. It is expected that within its 50-year service, more than 150,000 lives will be changed onboard through surgery alone.

After construction is completed, this hospital ship will have the facilities needed to carry out a wide range of surgeries, including repairing cleft-lips and palates, removing cataracts and life-threatening tumors, correcting debilitating burn contractures, and more. The new hospital will cover most of decks 3 and 4 and will house six operating rooms, 102 acute care beds, seven ICU/isolation beds, and an additional 90 self-care beds.

Through direct surgical intervention, Mercy Ships stands in the gap and helps to alleviate pressure on a nation’s healthcare system. At the same time we help to increase and improve the healthcare system through training of local medical professionals and capacity building. We know that providing surgery alone is not enough to tackle the global surgery crisis, which is why we strive to support and strengthen the local surgical health system from grassroots to government in the most impactful way possible.

That is why in addition to the increased capacity for surgical care that we will be able to provide, the new ship will also increase our ability to train local healthcare professionals with dedicated teaching spaces and simulator labs for more effective surgical training. All pre- and post-operative work will be done onboard the Global Mercy, which minimizes our footprint when operating in busy ports.

With a training platform, observation facilities, and classrooms onboard, we can build for the future by providing vital training and mentoring of medical professionals while working to upgrade the local healthcare facilities of the nations we serve.

With the Global Mercy and Africa Mercy working together, we will more than double our surgical capacity, enabling us to operate in two countries simultaneously.

Mercy Ships has the potential, within a generation, to transform the healthcare story in Africa. Thanks to our family of partners, supporters, and volunteers, we have been able to help the next patient in line receive the surgery that will change their life, freeing them to embrace their future.

Together, we can make a difference to the lives of thousands and change the surgical landscape of whole countries, not only in the immediate future, but for decades to come.
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Maritime Resource Management Corp
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Dr. Keith Thomson  
Consultant Anesthetist
The North Hampshire Hospital
Berkshire, UK

*Executive Committee Member

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Mercy Ships National Offices

Mercy Ships International Support Center  
PO Box 2020
Garden Valley, TX 75771-2020
United States of America
mercyships.org

Mercy Ships Global Association  
Chemin de la Favorite 98
1012 Lausanne
Switzerland
mercyshipsglobal.org

Mercy Ships Australia  
PO Box 1080
Caloundra, Queensland 4551
Australia
mercyships.org.au

Mercy Ships Belgium
Eilandstraat 89, 9211 Zeebrugge
Belgium
mercyships.be

Mercy Ships Canada
Unit 7 - 316 Oak St
Victoria, BC V8X 1R1
Canada
mercyships.ca

Mercy Ships Denmark  
Jernbanegade 6, Koebenhavn
DK 2200 Hvidings
Denmark
mercyships.dk

Mercy Ships France  
Bouparc Aéroport
Chemin de Colomiers
31200 Fumay-Villafranche
France
mercyships.fr

Mercy Ships Germany  
Rostock Oerallee 2
DE - 88689 Lindenberg am Lech
Germany
mercyships.de

Mercy Ships Holland
Roterbuurtstraat 20
3521 JM Rotterdam
The-Netherlands
mercyships.nl

Mercy Ships Korea  
142-52, Gilsan Mercy Ships Korea
345, Achham-ri, Gwangjin-gu
Seoul, South Korea
mercyships.co.kr

Mercy Ships New Zealand  
PO Box 11387
Onehunga
Auckland 7616
New Zealand
mercyships.org.nz

Mercy Ships Norway
Markaangaade 46
4012 Kristiansand S
Norway
mercyships.no

Mercy Ships South Africa  
4 Minne Building
Corner of Cromer and Henley Roads
Muizenberg, 7945
South Africa
mercyships.co.za

Mercy Ships Spain  
Naver de la Esperanza
Apartado 1501
08080 Barcelona, Spain
nave.v.es

Mercy Ships Switzerland  
Marktstrasse 25
Ch-Fribourg 1383
Switzerland
mercyships.ch

Mercy Ships United Kingdom  
The Lighthouse
12 Middlesex Court
Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1 2EF
United Kingdom
mercyships.org.uk

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Life-changing surgical procedures

675,000+  
Dental procedures

44,300+  
Training to professionals in their field of expertise

6,425+  
Training to healthcare professionals to train others