

Dear [name]—

Today, we pause and honor our founders Don and Deyon Stephens, as we mark 45 years of Mercy Ships. What began as a vision has now tangibly impacted more than 1.2 million medical and programmatic beneficiaries through more than 110,000 life-changing surgeries.

“Did I imagine all of this in the beginning?” Don said. “No. I imagined that there would be ships, plural. But Mercy Ships has grown above my wildest dreams. ... And when we see what God is doing and will continue to do, my hope is that we will have a small but significant part in the kingdom growth in the continent of Africa.”

To hear more reflections from Don, please watch this [video](#).

Just a few days ago, the *Global Mercy* sailed away from the port of Dakar and is on her way to Tenerife for a period of maintenance. This field service was our third in a row in Senegal, and the latest chapter in our long-term relationship there. The journey began in 2018 when the *Africa Mercy* paid a short visit to Dakar, returning a year later to begin 10 months of surgical care and medical training. However, the ship had to leave earlier than anticipated in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This most recent field service on the *Global Mercy* was the fulfillment of a promise to return and would not have been possible without the hard work of 1,184 volunteers from 59 nations and 272 national crewmembers. It also required support from more than 50 corporate partners and many national partners.

These combined efforts enabled Mercy Ships to perform nearly 800 surgeries and train more than 600 healthcare professionals who will continue to strengthen Senegal’s surgical systems. While this season in Senegal is ending, the impact of the *Global Mercy* is only beginning.

If you’ve not had the opportunity to see this short End of Field Service [video](#), I’ve included it here. After her refit this summer, the hospital ship will soon arrive in Sierra Leone, where her crew will serve their third country this year and bring hope and healing to even more families.

Meanwhile, the *Africa Mercy* continues to undergo refit in Durban, South Africa. The galley has been gutted and reconfigured, and the dining room is being renovated and includes private dining spaces and better sound proofing. The technology overhaul begins next month to ensure optimal connectivity and digital security. And, while all this work is going on, the vessel is in dry dock undergoing maintenance and repair on the shafts, rudders, blades, and hull.

We are looking forward with great anticipation to being able to serve patients via a two-ship fleet, yet we know that we will need even greater resources—especially volunteers. Please pray for the staffing team as they recruit candidates for vital roles, from a new managing director for each ship to surgeons, engineers, human resources staff, nurses, and others.

By all accounts, it will be a productive second half of 2023. We press on, continuing to follow the 2,000-year-old model of Jesus. Thanks for your continued support.

Blessings,
Gert