

# *Friend Ships*

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## July 2025 Activities Report

Dear Friends:

Thank you so much for all you continually do. In October, Friend Ships will be celebrating our 40th year in operation. There is no way to convey the Lord's faithfulness over the years. From the time He called us to get a ship and start to help the poor, He has been ever-present, with us in every crisis and in each victory, making the way where there was no way, there to encourage and delight us with the desires of our hearts. He has bound us together with His wonderful Saints around the world and we have repeatedly experienced the scripture, "Truly I tell you," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life." Some people say that we have given up the comforts and pleasures of life but when we recount a tiny portion of what He's given us, we ask, who gave up what? Our God - isn't He wonderful?

Over the years, the Lord has given us 16 ships with full title, two helicopters, a couple of planes, a fleet of trucks and we can't recall how many yachts. He gave us the wonderful home base Port Mercy to land our ships without fees, with 2000 feet of waterfront 35 miles up the river in Lake Charles, a four lane highway with a beautiful center divider that ends at our front gate less than a mile from the I-10 freeway. The Lord thought of everything.

Some may say "Well, you can't just serve the Lord. You have to eat!" For more than 15 years, in Los Angeles, while our ships were sailing in and out, we operated a food ministry that was at the time, probably one of the largest in America. We sent out food for up to 150,000 meals weekly - week after week, month after month, year after year without buying a single dime's worth of food. God sent it in by the truckloads, free of charge. One store in Los Angeles, Trader Joes, keeps track of every item they give us by bar code and that store alone donates \$500,000 worth of food a year, every year, giving us nothing but their best. And there are many other stores too numerous to mention. Today we still feed the poor and help other organizations with their food needs, in Los Angeles, Lake Charles, Galveston. Wherever we go, we try to be a blessing and reflect well on the Lord. The only thing we seem to have to worry about is our waistlines from all the goodies constantly before us. There are so many other blessings, too numerous to count and we are not worthy of a single one. Our God is an awesome God. He reigns on heaven and earth. What a glorious God we serve.

We have met the most generous, right-hearted, God honoring people and have been the fortunate recipient of their love. It must be said that truly God moves upon people's hearts mostly without being asked. They give to us freely, even ships, and many things of great value. Simply, "We feel this would be a

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blessing for you and I both if you would receive these gifts." We honor these people. What great servants of God they are. We humbly thank you but we know the Lord has already thanked you in ways we will never even know. We have been able to help people around the world in their darkest hour and watch them grow into a better life. We've had the honor to welcome as our Friend Ships team the best of mankind, self-sacrificing to a fault, loving the Lord to their utmost, honoring their call when it is most difficult and truly becoming our sons and daughters. We'd like to say thank you to all the wonderful people that made this happen, that came with all they had to offer, laying down their lives and putting them on hold to spend themselves and in some cases, their families, as they came to work with us, to push the ships to sea. After years of work, some never even sailed on the ships but they caused others to be able to do so. They chipped, painted, cleaned, welded, loaded. They did all it took to put us to sea. I wonder how God values this and when they come before Him, what will He think. Silver and gold had they none. But what they had, they gave us. That is our crew and those who support us from Seattle, to California, from the Caribbean Islands, to Europe, Africa, through the Soviet Union, to Israel and the Middle East.

As we come upon the 40 year mark in our journey we know that this is the start of a new era, one even more productive and effective than the last 40 glorious years. We invite you, our support team, to join us in October to celebrate God's goodness, His faithfulness, His love and the awesome future! As we take pen in hand to write this letter from Jerusalem, preparing for our medical camp in Syria and having meetings now as we speak for several more much larger camps in the demilitarized zone around Israel, we are thinking, what do we know about medicine? How can we build these facilities the size they are asking for and then we giggle. What did we know about ships, especially 16 of them. What did we know about feeding 150,00 meals a week? What did we know about running the camps in Syria and Gaza? We know if we take on something we are capable of doing, we are sure to make a mess of it. But when we do the impossible, when people scoff and say "you are crazy," "it can't be done", "how arrogant of these people to think they can just do these things", then we know we are probably on the right track because we know if God doesn't do it, it won't be done. Nothing is impossible if God is with you.

In the words of an ancient Chinese proverb, "The one who says something is impossible, should get out of the way of the men doing it." Only with God, this can be true. The first 40 years have been wonderful but now we are planning our next 40. We will have to live to 120 to make it happen but who knows? All things are possible. To Him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Love, Don & Sondra