

**Zeitschrift:** Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand  
**Herausgeber:** Swiss Society of New Zealand  
**Band:** 74 (2008)  
**Heft:** [10]

**Artikel:** From Liberia, with Mercy - a modern day Christmas story  
**Autor:** [s.n.]  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-943716>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 09.07.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

## From Liberia, with Mercy - a modern day Christmas story

The operating room is somewhat cramped, the halls narrow and the orderlies from all over the world, but little else would distinguish this hospital from any other.

Except that this hospital has been built inside a ship and that outside its cool confines is the port of Monrovia.

Below deck aboard the Africa Mercy, a hospital ship operated by the charity Mercy Ships, Dany Kyburz, a 29-year-old Swiss operating-room nurse prepares for surgery.

For this two-month mission on the ship, she is on a team specialising in repairing a devastating childbirth-related injury known as obstetric fistula.

They are part of a larger cast of medical professionals trying to fill the gap between what's offered by constrained African governments and the serious challenges facing many of their citizens. Most surgeries Mercy Ships provides are unavailable in these countries - at any price. Here, they are free.

The charity will leave Liberia by the end of the year, having spent ten months repairing cataracts, cleft lips, burns, disfigured limbs and removing massive craniofacial tumours.

In the operating room, or off-ship, within a community rehabilitation project, there are few apparent differences between Mercy Ships and other NGOs whose signs pepper the roadsides of poor countries around the world.

However most of the staff with Mercy Ships are not only volunteers but pay for their stays on the ship. They are often sponsored by churches, community groups and private donors from their home countries; the charity says this allows it to direct its entire resources to beneficiaries.

Switzerland, a landlocked country, would seem an unlikely place to launch a maritime opera-

tion, but Switzerland was absolutely key to the founding of Mercy Ships.

The story began 30 years ago in the city of Lausanne with Stephens, a young American missionary. From his account, he had a vision, a lot of enthusiasm but not much else. Originally from Colorado and having come to Switzerland to train with the Christian organisation Youth With a Mission, Stephens had the idea of establishing a fleet of hospital ships and began the process of soliciting support. With its many financial institutions, Switzerland would be a good place to start, he thought.

He fortunately had contact with the owners of Suisse Atlantique, at the time one of the country's major shipping firms, who advised him as he developed a feasibility study and financial plans.

Unbeknown to him, somebody had put in a good word on his behalf to a major Swiss bank, which would provide financing. He was 33 years old when he won the vessel at auction. The \$1 million purchase price of the ship Victoria amounted to half its scrap metal value. But with an army of volunteers and years of patience, Mercy Ships over four years retrofitted the former cruise liner, re-christened Anastasis - Greek for "Resurrection" - and the rest is history.

Since 1978, the organisation has put several ships into service but has decommissioned all but the Africa Mercy, a converted Danish rail ferry, which allows the organisation to operate more efficiently. Mercy Ships is studying whether it should expand its fleet with another used ship or whether it should build its own. Studies are under way of the Indian subcontinent and several different nations in Asia. But Africa alone could certainly use two ships if not more.

*from swissinfo*



**Dr Veronika Isler**  
Psychological Services

**REGISTERED CLINICAL  
PSYCHOLOGIST**

PhD, PGD (clin) Psych NZPS and NZICP

Children; adolescents and their families;  
adults and couples; work-related issues

Services available in English, Swiss  
or German language

**Ph. (07) 834 1200 or 021 457 944**

Offices in Hamilton and Te Awamutu  
P O Box 6057, Hamilton



Incorporating Domestic &  
Commercial Work  
Specialists in Fabric & Leather  
Upholstery

Also Deep Diamond Buttoning  
All Furniture Re-Upholstery

**Swisscraft Ltd**

Manager: **Herbert Staheli**

Showroom: 33-39 Colombo St  
Frankton-Hamilton

Call us

**Phone 07 8477 220**

**Fax 07 8473 039**



TRADITIONAL FINE MEATS AND SMALL GOODS

**AVAILABLE NOW!**

**New Zealand's finest  
Delicatessen Meats**

Continental Frying/Boiling Sausages

- Specialty Meats • Meat Loaves
- Smoked Meats • Cold Cuts
- Salamis • Dried Meats



Visit our factory shop:  
68-70 Greenmount Drive  
East Tamaki, Auckland

Hours: Monday to Thursday 8am-4pm  
Friday 8am-5pm • Saturday 8am-1pm

P 09 274 4455 F 09 274 1203 W [www.swissdeli.co.nz](http://www.swissdeli.co.nz)

P O Box 51-520 Pakuranga Auckland 2140