

A little white ship comes to Fiji

IT is a beautiful dawn in the South Pacific and the glory of the sun's rising behind the Pacific island of Koro is dazzling, and it would be easy to miss the little white ship edging cautiously, humbly, into the bay.

It is so tranquil here, so quiet and were you to be standing on the beach under the trembling palms you might dream for the gift to paint this scene so that others would believe it is real.

But back to the little white ship - no play-boy's yacht nor yet a cruise ship, she is the "Pacific Link", a converted trawler which belongs to Marine Reach, which is the maritime arm of the international mission agency, Youth With A Mission.

With 50 people of many nations on board, she is here on serious business. A surgeon, nurses, and teams of young people from churches in New Zealand and USA and the ship's own crew (including the Rector of Wiveliscombe here for a two month sabbatical) will be flat out for the next ten days.

The task is complex; working with the Fijian health services to bring medical, dental and optical care to people who will not get it otherwise; offer support and encouragement to local schools and churches, and even build a new cookhouse for the health centre.

The captain for this trip is a tough, kindly Kiwi trawler skipper, Roger Connolly, and it is only when he is happy that the place is right that the anchor is sent crashing into the sea.

But this is the beginning not the end of the voyage, not a time for rest. The setting may be tranquil but inside the ship there is a great buzz of communication, department to

department, person to person, everyone pulling as a team to make it work trying to make it work.

Ship to shore liaison, transportation, courtesy visits and ceremonies with the villages, and a whole raft of practical problems are being sorted, but already the advance planning and prayer is beginning to bear fruit, friendships are being forged, it is it beginning to come together.

A unique partnership of healing is already starting to blossom and many will be changed, not least the crew of the "Pacific Link".

The surgeon for this trip is Dr Geoff Rutgard of San Diego. He is supported by a surgical team drawn from five nationalities and three continents.

Geoff is a quiet and deeply impressive human being, whose delight in the task is there for all to see, he just loves to restore the gift of sight to people.

He has also brought with him a group of young people from his home church who are rapidly bonding with a youth group from Cambridge, New Zealand.

The young Americans and Kiwis are soon on close terms and bouncing off one another, literally and figuratively, in the back of a truck lent by the generous and caring manager of the small tourist resort in the bay.

The destination is one of many school visits with games, drama and song to share.

While they are away, the medics at the ocean side get on with setting up the necessary screening processes, building materials for the new cookhouse are assembled and on board the "Pacific link", Barry, the engineer, begins to receive broken sewing machines, electricity generators and even spades for repair and restoration, and plans are made to host a conference aimed at encouraging

and supporting the island's church leaders.

When the time comes for the little white ship to put power to her windlass and weigh anchor, over 80 people will have received life-changing surgery, grandparents will see grandchildren for the first time, deep friendships will be forged, prayer and praise sung in mutual encouragement with the Fijian people, and many (but especially the young crew members) will have gained beyond words from the lessons of living in closely shared community, touched and changed by God through their experiences in His service.

And as she leaves to return to her operating base on the main Fijian island of Viti Levu, so preparations once again begin, this time for a visit with dental and construction teams from New Zealand to the island of Kadavu.

Who knows where in the Pacific she may be going in the months and years to come; Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, the Solomon Islands? Would you like to be there?

Recruitment for missions in 2007 is already beginning and we would especially like to hear from anyone who feels called to this ministry and who has relevant marine navigation or engineering skills or health care professionals who would like to be part of the Marine Reach vision.

But no matter who you are, if your answer is "yes, this could be for me", why not explore it further by talking to Revd Graham Owen who can be reached at graham@owen31.freeserve.co.uk or at the Rectory in Wiveliscombe.

Similarly, if you are inspired by the work of Marine Reach, Graham would be only too happy to pass on any financial help you could offer towards keeping the ship in business.

PHOTO FORUM



Dunster Fayre by Frankie Dransfield, a Photo Forum member

Correction

UNFORTUNATELY the last edition of the Messenger came out just as we had agreed to change our usual meeting date, which caused some confusion.

Please note that from now on the regular meeting date for the Photo Forum will be the last Thursday in the month, at 7:30pm, at The Chapel Gallery in South Street, Wiveliscombe.

Need a job?

THE Community Office now has a 'Situations Vacant' and a 'Situations Wanted' board. If you'd like to advertise, the rates are £1 and 50p respectively.

Call in and ask one of the staff.



Great Sounds all around the 10 Parishes and even further!

Julian Mellor, one of the organisers, said: "The idea of a radio station for such a small rural community is a first. The spirit in which it has been created has seen over 100 local people working with humour, enthusiasm and imagination to pull together to achieve something special."

"At times the studio phone never stops ringing with requests and suggestions, and local organisations and businesses that we have featured have immediately experienced an increase in enquiries. Everyone seems to be talking about 10Radio."

Thanks to everyone involved for a month of truly local radio broadcasting.

10Radio was funded by Kingsmead School, Awards for All, Taunton Deane Borough Council Arts, Local Strategic Partnership, Somerset County Council Adult Learning and Leisure and the Jim Laker Fund.

The studio has been leased free of charge from the Cooperative Group.

Pumpkin Soup with Creme Fraiche

Serves 4

- * 50g (2oz) butter
- * 2 onions, sliced
- * 900g (2lb) pumpkin flesh, chopped
- * 4 rashers smoked bacon, chopped
- * 1 tbsp fresh thyme leaves, plus extra to garnish
- * 1 tbsp brown sugar
- * 600ml (1pt) milk
- * 600ml (1pt) chicken or vegetable stock

- * Creme fraiche, to serve
1. Melt the butter in a large pan. Add the onion and fry gently for 5 minutes. Stir in the pumpkin, bacon, thyme and sugar and cook for a few minutes more.
 2. Pour in the milk and stock, then cover and leave to simmer for 30 minutes.
 3. Puree two ladles of the



soup in a blender, then pour back into the pan to thicken the mixture. Serve in warm bowls topped with a generous spoonful of creme fraiche, a scattering of thyme leaves and some crusty bread. For a change, add a knob of fresh grated ginger when adding the pumpkin to the pan.

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