

Port Ministry touches lives around the world

July 6, 2012

FREEPORT—Texas Port Ministry, located at Freeport, serves one of the fastest growing ports on the Gulf Coast, and its ministry reaches the ends of the earth.

Bobby Fuller (right), director of Texas Port Ministry, and Chaplain Robyn Crosby (center) pray with Ferdinand, a Filipino seaman serving on board the Scandinavian Reefer.
(PHOTOS/Josh Hayter)

Nearly 900 ships and 200,000 trucks come through the harbor at Port Freeport each year. About 23,000 seafarers from more 50 countries serve on those ships, and many of the truckers—particularly drivers based out of California—also hail from around the world.

Ministry Director Bobby Fuller uses [Acts 1:8](#) to put it in perspective.

"The ends of the earth come to us on ships. Our Judea and Samaria come to us in trucks, and our Jerusalem makes its living right here in the Freeport harbor," Fuller said. "I don't know of anyone else that can do Acts 1:8 in one place. And I like it."

Texas Port Ministry volunteers meet needs by providing spiritual, social and physical care. Located just outside the port authority security perimeter, the ministry center provides a place where seafarers can relax on dry land and truck drivers can get a free shower.



Nearly 900 ships and 200,000 trucks come through the harbor at Port Freeport each year.

Guests immediately notice a Texas theme. Old West-style pictures hang on the wall next to rusted iron stars. A saddle rests against one of the walls—perfect for visitors to climb on, throw one hand in the air and get a quick picture. Computers offer free Internet access. Pool, table tennis and air hockey tables invite friendly competition, and a big-screen TV and several chairs provide places for relaxation. The center also supplies clean clothes and other necessities free of charge.

A bookshelf with Bibles in 56 languages allows seafarers and truck drivers from all over the world to read Scripture in their own language. "Jesus" films are available in several languages.

A Christian mariner from Costa Rica often asks Fuller for Spanish-language Bibles and tracts to share on docks in Colombia and Costa Rica.

Local churches provide and serve lunch for 30 to 50 truck drivers, seafarers and port workers every Monday.



Texas Port Ministry makes available copies of the Bible in 56 languages, allowing seafarers and truck drivers from all over the world to read Scripture in their own language.

"I want the people that come here to know that this church in our area is involved in what we're doing," Fuller said. "If they don't have a church, maybe they'll connect."

Fuller recently implemented Scripture reading and prayer with the meal.

"It's pretty simple. It's pretty short," he said. "But it's planting seeds of the gospel with every one of them."

Fuller recalled one trucker who walked into Texas Port Ministry during a meal and asked if his family could eat, too. He returned with his wife, a 2-year-old son and a 3-day-old baby. Then he told Fuller his story.

"We're basically homeless. We live in the truck. I'm trying to get my bills taken care of and get enough money to buy a house. Are you a pastor or something?" he asked Fuller.

After Fuller said he was, the man asked him to bless his baby. Fuller held the baby and said a prayer with the family at the Monday meal.

Fuller and volunteers visit ships in the port daily. On a visit to the Scandinavian Reefer, Fuller and Chaplain Robyn Crosby met Ferdinand, a 49-year-old Filipino seafarer who has worked on ships 28 years.

"Being away from the family is the hardest part," Ferdinand said.



He's been married 17 years—a difficult matter for a seafarer who can be gone up to nine months or more at a time. Loneliness and depression are common among seafarers and truck drivers. Seclusion for such a long time can be difficult.

Before leaving the ship, Fuller asked Ferdinand if he had the assurance he would go to heaven when he dies. The seafarer told him he lacked that certainty "because I have so many sins."

"I have good news for you," Fuller told him. "God forgives sin."

He explained how, through Christ, a person could be cleansed of sin and gain assurance of salvation.

"Today I have received a very good message," the seafarer said.

When the Scandinavian Reefer returns to the port, Fuller hopes to meet Ferdinand again.

In the meantime, he and the volunteers will continue to serve and share the gospel. But to do that, the ministry needs volunteers and money.

Texas Baptists provide some funds for the ministry through their gifts to the [Mary Hill Davis Offering for Texas Missions](#). But after Fuller loses support from the North American Mission Board at the end of the year, he'll need additional funding.

"We pray for workers and for support all the time," he said. "Sometimes it's easy for people to give supplies, but it's harder for them to say 'yes' with their feet and to go. God's got to move in their hearts to bring them to the point where they'll say, 'Yes, I'll do what you want me to do.'"

Mission opportunities at the Texas Port Ministry center include:

- *In-kind contribution such as magazines, snacks, Bibles, tracts, music audiocassettes and other items.*
- *Male volunteers to visit seafarers aboard their ships and to drive a van to transport seafarers to and from the port.*
- *Men and women to provide hospitality to seafarers at the center.*

For more information, contact Bobby Fuller at (979) 233-5641 or visit the website at texasportministry.org