



**inside:** The Mission's global frontline teams share how they prepare for successful ship visits

# This Christmas, give a gift that makes a difference

Ordering our cards and virtual gifts not only helps support seafarers during this special time of year, but it also helps to raise awareness with all of those who you send them to. Give back to seafarers this year and show them that they have a place at your table this Christmas.



Order today at [www.missiontoseafarers.org/shop/christmas](http://www.missiontoseafarers.org/shop/christmas) or call **01227 811 622**

## Welcome to the latest edition of FAN!

Although families may present struggles as well as joy, family life remains vital. Its importance is enshrined in the Human Rights Act. For seafarers also families are crucial.

I am delighted then that in this edition of FAN, amongst other features, you will read something of the innovative work we are doing with seafarers' families.

Separation from families and limited communication with home are an ever-present challenge of life at sea. The impact of this on seafarers' wellbeing is very clear to our chaplains and ship visitors. Bearing in mind the huge challenges of seafaring and the risks they bring, one might sometimes wonder why seafarers do it. The most common answer is "Family".

On average, each seafarer supports at least 15 family members in their country of origin. These people are ever present in seafarers' hearts, and they provide for them through the work that they do. It is for their sake that a seafarer lays down their own hopes of family life. They give up being present at the birth and growth of their children, the marking of festivals, or holding the hand of a departing parent. It takes a toll both on the seafarer and their family.

It is a privilege of our mission and calling to stand with seafarers and their families, supporting them at



home and at sea. As we stand by them, those who support our work stand with us. Thank you for all that your support means.

**The Ven. Dr Peter Rouch**  
Secretary General

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# A Legacy of Leadership and Compassion



**As Revd. Canon Andrew Wright retires after 11 years of exceptional service as Secretary General, Tomilayo Toluhi, the Mission's Chief Operating Officer, reflects on the transformative impact he has had on the organisation.**

Andrew joined The Mission to Seafarers in 2013, bringing with him a profound sense of mission, a deep passion for the welfare of seafarers and an unwavering commitment to improving their quality of life.

Whether working on global initiatives or visiting ports, Andrew prioritised the individual needs and dignity of each seafarer, reminding the world that

behind the global shipping industry are hardworking men and women deserving of care and respect.

His commitment to the Mission's core values of compassion, collaboration, and respect for all has been at the heart of his work. Over the past decade, Andrew shaped the Mission into a modern, innovative organisation.

## PIONEERING INNOVATION

Andrew led regionalisation of the Mission's global work, strengthening global governance, developing strong leadership across the organisation and promoting the development of key programmes such as the Family Support

Networks, WeCare and SafeTalk suicide awareness. Major strides in the digital space include the Seafarers' Happiness Index and the Happy at Sea App.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, seafarers faced unprecedented hardships, with extended contracts, limited shore leave, and mental health challenges exacerbating the already difficult nature of life at sea.

Under Andrew's leadership, The Mission launched emergency response initiatives including gangway visits, seafarer vaccinations, Chat-to-a-Chaplain and the Flying Angel Campaign, which raised vital funds to provide seafarers with enhanced welfare services.

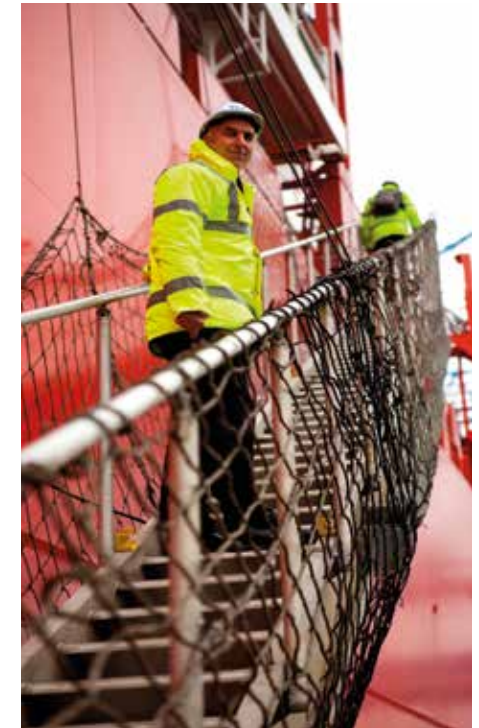
As Chairman of the International Christian Maritime Association, Andrew championed the cause of seafarers being recognised as key workers during the pandemic.

## A TRUE VOICE FOR SEAFARERS

Andrew led the Mission to become a stronger voice on the international stage, advocating for the rights and welfare of seafarers on a global level.

In 2022 he was included at number 82 in Lloyds List's 100 most influential people in the shipping industry, recognising his efforts to promote the welfare of seafarers during the pandemic. He was again recognised by Lloyd's List in 2023 at number 78, this time for assistance provided to the families of Ukrainian seafarers.

**“Andrew shaped the Mission into a modern, innovative organisation.”**



As Andrew Wright retires, he leaves a legacy of compassion, dedication, and tangible impact. We wish him a fulfilling retirement, confident that the seeds he has planted during his time with The Mission to Seafarers will bear fruit for years to come.

**“ He leaves a legacy of compassion”**



# Contemplating **the Future**

The Mission's Secretary General, The Ven. Dr Peter Rouch reflects on a busy few months settling into his new role.

A lot has impressed me about the Mission since I began this new role just a few months ago.

I was in Durban recently speaking with a staff member who was working tirelessly to resolve a situation involving an abandoned ship.

This dedication is something I've seen expressed repeatedly across the Mission – from those in ports to the team at IHQ and our wonderful board of trustees.

## AN EVER-SHIFTING INDUSTRY

As we consider the future of the organisation, we need to be mindful of the major changes taking place within the industry as a whole.

Whilst shipping is of course global, the busiest area is increasingly an arc running roughly from Dubai round to the west coast of the USA. This eastward shift must inevitably impact those who are seeking to support seafarers' welfare.

There's also a push for automation and environmental sustainability in the shipping industry, which could result in shorter shore times for crews and fewer crew members onboard.

Finally, the importance of data cannot be overstated. As seafarers spend less time in port, welfare agencies may find that

“ A lot has impressed me about the Mission”



THE VEN. DR PETER PETER ROUCH (CENTRE) WITH THE REVD. TIM LINKENS, CHAPLAIN TO THE HUMBER PORTS (LEFT) AND SEAFARERS

they have less contact time and a more slender evidence to guide decisions.

As in the past, we have grown and developed our work, sometimes in unexpected ways, in order to serve seafarers, I am sure we will continue to do so.

The current strategic plan runs through late 2026, so we will soon begin developing the next phase of our strategy.

It's essential that we listen carefully to a wide range of perspectives – involving senior colleagues, the board, regional staff, crews, agencies and corporate partners around the world.

## MANAGING A 'GLO-CAL' ORGANISATION

The global nature of shipping and of seafarers' lives places us in the middle of things – in a diverse range of organisations, issues and world events.

“ We need to be mindful of the major changes”

“ Without you, nothing is possible”

For The Mission to Seafarers the local is always global too, and global events rapidly impact what happens locally. We are always both global and local – “glo-cal.”

We must never forget that global ideas have to be expressed by real people reaching out to those in need in specific places.

The Mission to Seafarers is already doing many things well, from engaging with a broad range of corporate partners to providing services in hundreds of ports worldwide.

I am very thankful to my predecessor, Revd. Andrew Wright, who played such a full part in that. There are people alive today who wouldn't be if not for The Mission to Seafarers and those who support it.

To our volunteers and supporters, I want to say: without you, nothing is possible. Thank you.

# Like Father, Like Daughter

Meet Linda Watts, our new chaplain in Costa Rica, who steps into the role her father, George Watts, held for five years before her.



## IS SEAFARING IN YOUR BLOOD?

My father was the chaplain before me for five years, and he's still involved as a volunteer now. Also, I have a brother, and he just graduated as a ship captain, and my grandfather was a captain, and so was my uncle. So yes, seafaring is in my blood!

## WHERE DID YOUR JOURNEY WITH THE MISSION BEGIN?

It began when I used to read some materials that my dad brought home, and I admired the women chaplains I saw. I always used to assist him by sending reports with photos, and I was also involved in Zoom meetings, visiting, and with the cruise ships.

## WHY DO YOU LOVE YOUR JOB?

I love to help people. I was an English teacher before, and I am a lay minister in the Episcopal Church. I got involved because seafarers need a lot of support and encouragement. So, just like how I serve as a lay minister at church, I do the same for the Mission.

## WHAT IS THE PORT LIKE IN COSTA RICA?

There are two terminals in Puerto Limón. At the APM terminal, you have a lot of larger container vessels visiting every day.



“ I love to help people”

Then, at the other terminal, you have small vessels and also cruise ships, but there are no cruise ships from October until May.

## WHAT COMMON REQUESTS DO YOU GET FROM SEAFARERS?

When they come ashore, the first thing seafarers ask is, 'Where is a McDonald's or a KFC?' A common request is that they want SIM cards, and also we have a shopping list. They also like local coffee and pistachios.

## WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

There was a Seamen's Centre, but it's inactive right now. One of my missions is to reactivate it because that's what seafarers are asking for. It would have an internet connection and maybe different things for entertainment because they want a little entertainment when they come ashore.

“ Seafaring is in my blood”



# Enhancing Safety and Efficiency in Ship Visits

Earlier this year, the Mission's Middle East and South Asia (MESA) Region hosted a conference, which included a session on how to plan and prepare for successful ship visits.

Led by Regional Director Revd. John Attenborough, the session, highlighted the considerations made ahead of ship visits. These included following the safety and security protocols set out by the ports, identifying priority visits depending on welfare needs and ideal times to visit, selecting materials to take on board, how to engage with seafarers while onboard to make the most of the visit and much more. The session and subsequent discussions emphasised how much effort and care goes into planning ship visits to ensure crews are well supported.

Three ports offer insight into their ship visit preparations:

## BANGKOK, THAILAND

In bustling ports like Bangkok, logistics are essential. Our team carefully studies arrival and departure schedules to maximise their time and effort, focusing on ships that are less likely to have interacted with the Mission.

Shipping agents serve as gatekeepers to boarding. Over the years, we've built strong relationships with them, especially when addressing welfare concerns.

Bangkok is distinct for hosting reefer ships, which spend months at sea collecting fish. These vessels dock at secluded private terminals, where we provide portable Wi-Fi for crew members to contact their families and transport to visit the town.

## GOOLE, UK

Located about 50 miles from the North

Sea, Goole is the UK's most inland port and can host up to eight vessels simultaneously. Our ship visitors, Steve and Frankie, typically conduct visits on Sunday afternoons, with preparations beginning the day before.

They use MarineTraffic and ShipVisitor apps alongside port authority forecasts, and the Mission's WhatsApp groups to monitor ships, identify welfare needs, and prioritise visits.



“ The ShipVisitor app helps monitor crew welfare”

Before visiting, Steve and Frankie meet to finalise plans, review safety protocols, and check their materials. They always dedicate their time to the Lord in prayer.

## VANCOUVER, CANADA

In Vancouver, strong partnerships with the port, terminal operators, and relevant organisations are crucial for ship visits, where strict protocols are enforced. All our ship visitors complete terminal orientation, the Ship Welfare Visitor Course, and must wear protective gear.

The team uses the International Christian Maritime Association's Ship Visitor app and the port app to gather detailed information on crews, welfare needs, and prior visits.

This preparation ensures that when we step on the gangway, we make the most of our limited time. Our logo is always visible, so crews immediately recognise us. We offer care packages, treats, spiritual materials, and are careful to respect the crew's space and time.



“ Our logo is always visible”

# Meet our New Chaplains

A few of our newest chaplains share their experiences of settling into life at The Mission to Seafarers.

## 1 PORT CHAPLAIN, JASON FLINN – HALIFAX, CANADA



Being just 7 months in the position of chaplain and ship visitor, it feels like home at The Mission to Seafarers in

Halifax. I have benefitted greatly from the training the North American Maritime Ministry Association offers, the Mission community and learnings from my master's programme. The conferences I've been to have also helped me connect with a wider community who I can lean on and learn from.

## 3 REVD. HUGH ELLIS – GIBRALTAR

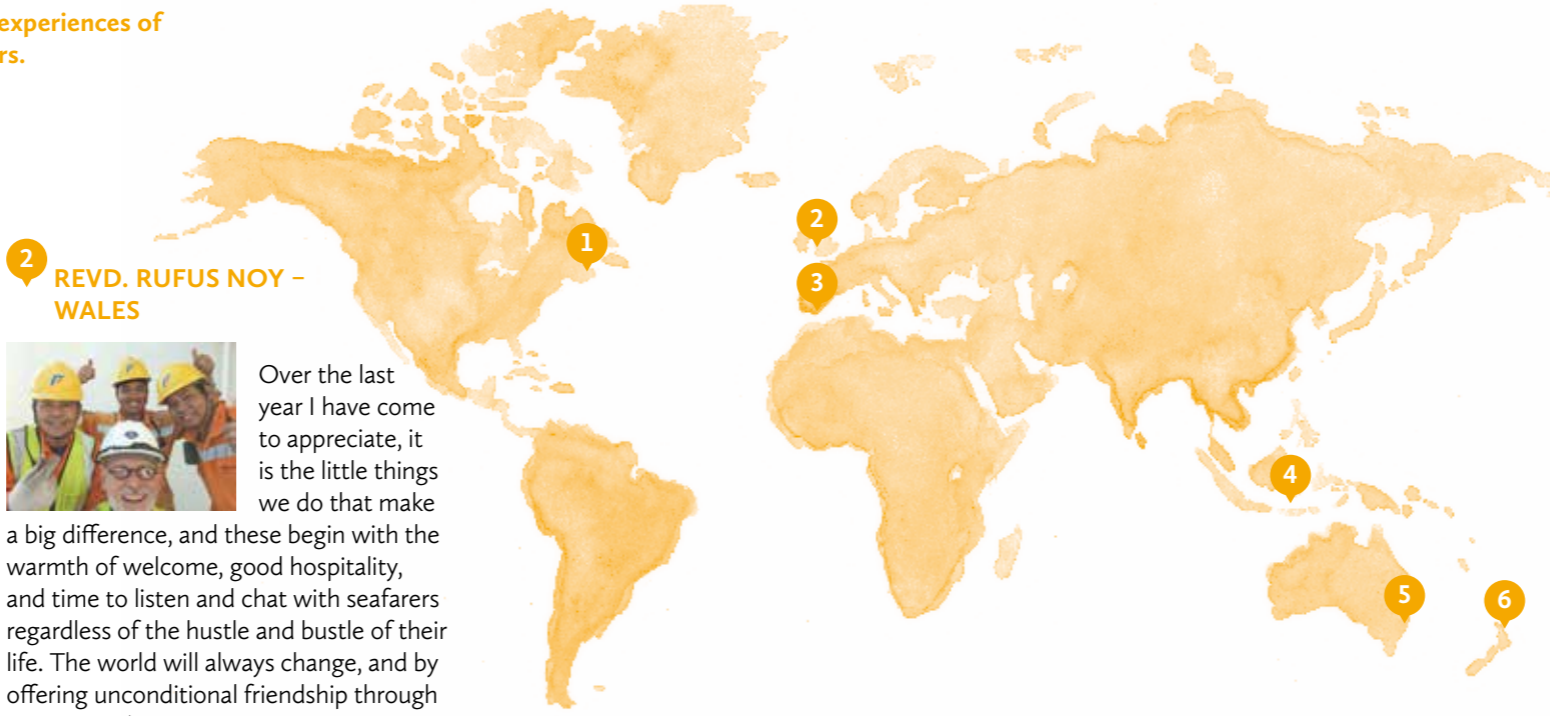


Together with my co-chaplain, our strategy has been to meet with as many

crew members as possible. I've loved the work, each encounter being unique, with divine encounters of far-reaching impact. With up to 77 nationalities onboard the larger cruise ships we see many challenges. Every day is different, in which we see God's hand at work.

“It feels like home”

THE MISSION OPERATE IN 200 PORTS IN OVER 50 COUNTRIES. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT: [WWW.MISSIONTOSEAFARERS.ORG/OUR-PORTS](http://WWW.MISSIONTOSEAFARERS.ORG/OUR-PORTS)



## 2 REVD. RUFUS NOY – WALES



Over the last year I have come to appreciate, it is the little things we do that make

a big difference, and these begin with the warmth of welcome, good hospitality, and time to listen and chat with seafarers regardless of the hustle and bustle of their life. The world will always change, and by offering unconditional friendship through the Mission's work, it breaks down barriers and gives the seafarers assurance that they are cared for.

## 4 REVD. JOSEPHA TARIGAN – INDONESIA



During my training, I met many seafarers. Most of them had the same reasons for becoming seafarers: the promising salary

and the need to support their families. However, at the same time, they had to leave the families they love for long periods. As ship visitors, this is where we serve them. Visiting them to bring them home when they are far away from home.

## 5 REVD. RETCHIE SALVADOR – SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA



Our multi-talented Revd. Retchie, has a master's degree from the Sydney College

of Divinity, speaks Korean as well as several Filipino dialects, and loves joining in singalongs with seafarers. Revd. Retchie's warmth, Filipino upbringing, and willingness to do whatever is needed have helped him to quickly connect with seafarers of all nations and faiths.

## 6 PORT CHAPLAIN, JOEL PEARCE – PORT OF TAURANGA, NEW ZEALAND



As a chaplain, I've been struck by how everyone around the world has the same needs: family, a sense of belonging, and not feeling

alone. Many seafarers are sacrificing these needs to provide for their families. I feel that being able to support them in their hardships has changed me as much as it has helped them.



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FEATURE

# Experiencing Australia

**Ben Bailey, The Mission's Director of Programme, reflects on the organisation's vast and varied work he experienced during his recent visit to Australia.**

In July, I had the privilege of attending The Mission to Seafarers' Australia Regional Conference in Fremantle. I participated in several sessions, including a keynote on global justice and welfare cases, the future of seafarers' centres, and recent research into illegal recruitment fees.

The conference was attended by more than 100 participants, including representatives from the industry and the Australian Government. Throughout the week, delegates visited the ports of Bunbury and Fremantle, where they learned about volunteer recruitment, governance, and cruise chaplaincy.

## REMOTE OUTREACH

Following the conference, Regional Director Sue Dight and I embarked on a whistle-stop tour of several ports in Western Australia. This was my first visit to the region, and it was encouraging to see how MtS is responding to the needs of seafarers in some of the world's most remote ports.

From the picturesque, pine-covered towns of Esperance and Albany to the hot, humid, and red-dusty ports of Port Walcott and Port Hedland, I encountered a Mission of deep contrasts.

**“The Mission's teams are beacons of hope.”**



In the south, historic centres stand at the entrance to the ports, each led by dedicated staff and volunteers. Port authorities provide much-needed funding and minibuses, but teams continue to face challenges in recruiting local volunteers to sustain the ministry.

## INNOVATION AND RENOVATION

In Port Hedland, located in the northwest, the Mission has adopted an innovative approach to raise support and awareness of the realities of life at sea. The team runs anchorage tours, allowing tourists to get up close to Capesize bulk carriers while learning about the Mission's work.

This historic seafarers' centre here has been a sanctuary for over 50 years but is no longer fit for purpose. More

than 150,000 seafarers visit this region annually, and the State Government, along with port levy investments, has committed to building a brand-new facility, closer to the port and easier for seafarers to access.

Just along the coast, in Port Walcott, we have been allocated a small room in Rio Tinto's health and safety building to support crews. Ships dock at jetties extending up to 3 km out to sea, and the team drives out to collect crews and bring them into town.

The sheer scale of activity in this region is almost impossible to comprehend, as tonnes of raw materials are mined and shipped worldwide. In these remote and often inhospitable environments, the Mission's teams are a beacon of hope, offering much-needed hospitality and friendship.



**“I encountered a Mission of deep contrasts.”**



FEATURE

## How you can support us

There are many ways in which you can support our work with seafarers around the world.

### Find out more about getting involved

Please tick the box below and fill out the contact details panel overleaf to find out more about:

- Fundraising
- Remembering The Mission in your Will
- Volunteering
- Involving your company
- Giving in memory of a friend or loved one

**We will send you regular updates about the work, needs and impact of The Mission to Seafarers.**

- Please tick if you would like to stop receiving communication from us by post
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- Please tick if you would like to receive email communications from us

**Please detach this form and send it in the Freepost Envelope Provided.**

You do not need to write any other details on the envelope.





# Seafarers Happiness Index

While seafarers' happiness ratings have improved slightly in the latest quarter, the most recent report shows evidence of a 'digital divide' in the industry.

In Q2 2024, the happiness rating is 6.99, up from 6.94 in Q1. Although the modest improvement should be welcomed, the picture is slightly more complicated.

According to the feedback from the Q2 report, the positive shift in seafarer wellbeing is a testament to improvements in a number of critical areas, including shore leave, wages, training, crew interaction, and workload.

Improved technology clearly allow for more meaningful interactions. As one seafarer explains, "I can share daily updates with my family and they can share with me too. It keeps me going."

## INEQUALITY AT SEA

However, there is growing disparity between those that have access to communication and training in new technologies and those who don't. It appears that tanker crews feel more prepared than those on dry cargo and container ships.

Limited shore leave, tight schedules, regulatory hurdles, and inconsistent port practices all add pressure. As one seafarer explained, "[there is] no time to



## “ There is growing disparity”

take a call or message because [there is] too much work and no signal.”

The report calls for the industry to prioritize seafarer welfare, ensuring equal access to essential services and support.

Thom Herbert from Idwal commented, "It's crucial that the industry addresses the digital divide and ensures equal access to training opportunities across all vessel types.

"Only by treating seafarer welfare as a non-negotiable priority across all sectors can we build a more resilient and sustainable maritime industry."

## “ The happiness rating is 6.99”

The Seafarers Happiness Index measures the well-being of seafarers through ten key questions about their work and life. To read the report in full visit [www.seafarershappinessindex.org](http://www.seafarershappinessindex.org).

# Suicide Awareness

Course Since launching the maritime version of SafeTALK, our suicide alertness course, earlier this year, demand has surged.



The Mission has worked tirelessly to prioritise mental health in the sector. Over the past few years, we've collaborated with Living Works to develop a course that addresses the specific challenges faced by those at sea.

So far, we have delivered three SafeTALK MTS courses in total, training 51 suicide alert helpers from various maritime organisations in Hong Kong and Singapore.

Additionally, 26 attendees participated in a two-day Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, a requirement for those wanting to become SafeTALK trainers.

One SafeTALK participant from a port authority told us, "The practice, or even thought, given towards asking about suicide directly made me realise how alien but important it is to ask. The simplicity of the TALK steps is an excellent approach to a tough subject."

## FURTHER EXPANSION

We now have eight certified trainers in Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, where the Mission participated in suicide

## “ We'd love for this training to become standard”

awareness events on 10 September, hosted by insurer Pandiman. Plans are underway to expand training to the USA and Latin America.

To continue shifting the industry's culture, we've secured a grant from the Seafarers' Charity to deliver SafeTALK courses through maritime institutions. This October, the Mission will conduct pilot sessions at the National Indian Maritime University.

"Response from the industry, including maritime colleges, shows we're on the right track," confirms Tom O'Hare, the Mission's Programme Manager.

"We'd love for this training to become standard across the board for anyone entering the industry," he added, underscoring the need for ongoing mental health initiatives.

If you would like to learn more about SafeTALK please email us on [safetalk@missiontoseafarers.org](mailto:safetalk@missiontoseafarers.org)



## Celebrating Sea Sunday

Across the world, as part of Sea Sunday, our global family have been celebrating seafarers and highlighting the importance of the work we're doing to support them.

### THE PHILIPPINES

Communities across the Philippines came together on Sea Sunday to celebrate and give thanks for seafarers. Our Family Support Network Chapters in New Washington and Belison hosted Sea Sunday celebrations, where seafarers shared their stories and prayers of thanks. Meanwhile, in the Alvatras Chapter, in addition to services of gratitude, the community united for a coastal clean-up.

### SOUTH AFRICA



On the 14 of July, the Mission joined the Diocese of Port Elizabeth to observe Sea Sunday with churches from the Greater Addo Archdeaconry. Our port chaplain, Revd. Philile Lobese, presided over mass attended by five churches in the area. "It was a wonderful opportunity to pray for our seafarers and introduce more people to the important work of the Mission".



### THAILAND

In Thailand, our team joined forces with a range of organisations to host a whole day of activities celebrating seafaring. The day started beautifully with a time of prayer, which was followed by the release of 60 mother crabs and millions of juvenile crabs back to their natural habitats. There was also a beach clean-up and the planting of 1,500 mangrove trees before everyone enjoyed a delicious spread of sustainably-sourced seafood.

### THE UNITED KINGDOM

Sea Sunday galvanises the Mission's supporters across the country as they host events, organise fundraisers, and donate to support our work. Many invited members of our team to speak at their Sea Sunday gatherings. Nina Edy, the Mission's Communications Manager, visited St Martin's Church in West Acton, London, where she shared more about the important work of the Mission and the crucial role supporters play in our efforts to support seafarers. Over at Goole, our ship visiting volunteer, Steve Percival, delivered a heartfelt sermon with trainee ship visitors Ben Grist (right) and Frankie Watson (left).



**Sea Sunday galvanises the Mission's supporters."**

# A Night of Tragedy and Compassion

**Our chaplain in Houston, The Revd. Thomas Morrow, reflects on a heart-wrenching tragedy and the importance of connecting through cultural divides.**



It was a usual Sunday evening, and I was visiting one final ship. From the moment I boarded, something felt off. Rust was everywhere, and my offers of SIM cards were quickly rebuffed. Not every visit is met with enthusiasm, so I left my details and noted my observations in my ship visitor’s app.

The next morning, the port was buzzing with activity. A ship had caught fire overnight while refuelling, resulting in two crew deaths and one airlifted to the hospital. I was astonished when I saw the name of the vessel – it was the one I visited just hours earlier.

At the terminal, the crew was huddled on the dockside, visibly traumatised, staring at the charred remains of their ship. After checking with them, I rushed to the hospital, where the injured seafarer was in the ICU with severe lung and throat damage. I stayed with him for a few hours, praying as he lay under sedation.

## COFFEE CONNECTIONS

On my way back to the port, I wanted to find a way to connect with the crew, so I picked up 18 coffees for them. I knew that many of them were Muslims from Tanzania, so I also found some prayers which I was able to play through my phone.

“ It was incredible to see the comfort it brought.”

It was incredible to see the comfort it brought. “Thomas, you have no idea what you have done for us,” one seafarer said, tears in his eyes.

Within hours, the crew was housed in a hotel. We sent a driver to Walmart to stock up on essentials and organised gift bags. My wife even baked traditional Paska bread for the Ukrainian members of the team—a small gesture that made a significant impact.

I continued to visit the injured seafarer too, and the last time I saw him, he was walking along the corridors as part of his physical therapy. When he’s ready to leave, we will send him off with a blessing.

“ You have no idea what you have done.”

# A Second Family

**Jonecar (Junie) Ermino recalls the day when her dream job on a cruise ship turned to tragedy, and the second family she found at The Mission to Seafarers in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in Canada.**

I am a 26-year-old Filipino seafarer by the name of Junie. I just started my international seafaring on the waters in 2022. After my cadetship, I was lucky to be hired by an international cruise ship. I never had any regrets about transferring to this new company until one day.

It was on 12 September when we approached the Port of Halifax. The gangway was rigged, but then I noticed that the platform and the stairs were not even, so I asked the person controlling the gangway to put the platform a little bit up.

To my surprise, my right foot got stuck between the step and the platform. The gangway kept pinning my foot, and the only thing I could do was scream. I managed to use my radio and call out, ‘STOP PLATFORM OUT’. At that very moment, I thought that was it, that was the end of my life. I felt death waving at me.

## FROM TRAGEDY TO RECOVERY

After a few minutes, the gangway was finally rigged out. Crew members came to me, holding my hand and trying to comfort me. I heard ‘code blue’, which means a medical emergency. Nurses and doctors came, and I could see how panicked they were.



“ I felt death waving at me.”

I’ve had four surgeries and stayed in the hospital for one month and four days. I really thank God that I survived it. I know that He was there for me, and He let me encounter such wonderful people like The Mission to Seafarers.

They helped me meet people from the Filipino Association. If it weren’t for them, I don’t know how I would have survived my journey. They cared for me like family. I am now on my recovery journey, and I don’t know when I will be able to walk again, but I have faith I will. I cannot wait to get back to seafaring again.

“ They cared for me like family.”

# PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

Our former Secretary General, Revd. Canon Andrew Wright, takes courage from the hymns, psalms and songs handed down from through generations.

Eternal Father, strong to save,  
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,  
Who bid'st the mighty ocean deep  
Its own appointed limits keep;  
O hear us when we cry to Thee,  
For those in peril on the sea.

This is the opening verse of that great hymn with which anybody associated with The Mission to Seafarers will be very familiar indeed. It may even be one of your “desert island disc” choices. For many seafarers, past and present, it has been an integral and important part of their lives – and many request it for their funerals.

It was written by William Whiting in 1860. Whiting had himself experienced a violent storm on board ship at the age

of 35. He believed he had dramatically experienced the God who calms the storm and rescues from the tumult.

Later, when William became headmaster of a school, one of his students confessed that he was terrified about a forthcoming voyage. He wrote the hymn in response, not least in the light of the great seafaring Psalm 107.

## **MORE THAN SONGS**

The tune, which we all know and love, was written by John Dykes, who named it Melita. Melita was an old word for Malta, the island where St Paul and his crew staggered ashore after the wreck of their ship. They had not expected to survive but Paul inspired them with his own faith in God. On arrival they

were met with the warm hospitality of the islanders who “lit fires and welcomed them”.

The letter to the Ephesians speaks of the importance of the singing of “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs”. It does so in the context of learning to live wisely. Singing hymns is a way both of praising God, building shared community faith and also of expressing core beliefs in a memorable way.

## **A PLACE OF REFUGE**

Sometimes the words of familiar hymns can help to sustain us in dark times. We can imagine countless seafarers having sung or muttered these words in the middle of dark, stormy and terrifying nights when they felt their lives under

“  
Countless seafarers  
having sung or muttered  
these words”

threat and experienced in an acute way the distance between them. Many will have found it a comfort as they cried out to God and maybe felt something of his reassuring presence.

The storms of life come in many forms and there are many moments, on or off ship, in which this might be one of the many hymns where we can turn.

O Christ, Whose voice the waters heard  
And hushed their raging at Thy word,  
Who walkedst on the foaming deep,  
And calm amidst its rage didst sleep;  
O hear us when we cry to Thee,  
For those in peril on the sea.

Amen



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