

The Master's Mariner

December, 2013



We're Officially Open!

We are very happy that seafarers and other visitors speak very positively about the attractiveness, warmth of character and practicality of our new Centre. It's what we hoped to achieve when designing and outfitting it and it is very satisfying when we hear such enthusiastic appreciation!

If, however, there is one facet of our new Centre in which we may struggle, it is our ability to host large gatherings. Although we rarely need to do so, we felt the 'squeeze' when planning our Official Opening celebrations. We were simply unable to host more than about 45 persons at any one time, which is a number far below the number of persons whom we wished to invite to the Opening.

Our solution was to have a three-fold opening over a period of about six weeks. The first component of our Opening featured Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir AO CVO, Governor of NSW as our Guest of Honour. Her Excellency unveiled a plaque as she declared the Centre officially to be Open.



The second component of the Opening was an Open Day, to which a general invitation was issued to you, our faithful readers and supporters. It was a great pleasure to meet so many of you throughout the day and to share our ministry with you.

The third component of the Opening was for Shipping Executives. Our Guest of Honour was Mr

Tim Sims, co-founder of Pacific Equity Partners, who addressed these industry leaders on the topic 'Investing in our seafarers, our industry, our livelihood.'



Because he is not a shipping industry 'insider', Tim was able to give the assembled CEOs an objective, 'unblinkered' view of the shipping industry. He pointed out, with poignant clarity, that the welfare of its seafarers is the bedrock (seabed?) upon which the industry rests. A very telling statistic was that seafarers who feel that they are valued and cared for are safer, healthier and are some 25%-50% more productive than seafarers who feel that they are simply an 'anonymous resource'. Tim's address hit home to his hearers and moves are afoot for Tim to address larger gatherings of Shipping executives so that more CEOs and managers may come to see their support for The Mission to Seafarers, Sydney as an essential investment in the welfare of their seafarers, to the great benefit of their industry and, consequently, in their own livelihoods.

Why 'The Flying Angel'?

Sometimes we are asked, 'What's with the flying angel?' Granted, its connection with maritime ministry is not immediately apparent - in fact, it could be said that it's a logo better suited to an aviation ministry than one to seafarers! So, how did it come to be our logo? I'm glad you asked!

In 1856, the 'Society for Promoting Missions to Seamen Afloat, at Home and Abroad' was established. Lord Shaftesbury, 'the leading

Evangelical layman of his day'¹ became its first President and Mr William Kingston, who was positively described as a 'consecrated layman' and 'loyal Churchman, unequivocally evangelical'², became its first Secretary.

Its Constitution declared:

1. *The object of the Society is the spiritual welfare of the seafaring classes at home and abroad.*
2. *In pursuance of this Object, the Society will use every means consistent with the principles and received practice of the Church of England.*

Later that year, Mr Kingston's wife and sister sought to design a flag whose emblem clearly depicted the Society's

Objects. Their design (right) depicted the first of the four angels (messengers) in Revelation 14. The



angel's message was 'an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. And he said with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.'³ This Gospel-proclaiming 'Flying Angel' became The Society's logo and was very popular.

The Flying Angel's message is at the heart of The Revelation and the history of The Mission to Seafarers. The angel's urgent message is that - in Jesus Christ alone - God provides absolute forgiveness and pardon for all those under His condemnation. In Jesus, God's perfect justice and perfect love are simultaneously, perfectly and uniquely expressed. In perfect love - God Himself fully absorbed the power of His own perfect justice, wrath and condemnation in place of you and me. Therefore, in 2Corinthians 5:19 the Apostle Paul writes, 'in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them.' The essence of God's forgiveness is that He Himself pays the penalty for our sinfulness. That is why it is only in Jesus that may a person be spared God's awful condemnation and punishment for their sins - sins past, present and future - and be accepted by God as a beloved, adopted child.

¹ Kverndal, R., 'Seamen's Missions: Their Origin and Early Growth.' (William Carey Library, Pasadena) 1986 p. 388.

² *ibid.* p. 388.

³ (Rev. 14:6-7, ESV)

This is the wonderful message the angel was charged to proclaim 'to every nation and tribe and language and people'. So much so, that those closest to the centre of God's throne sang to the Lord Jesus, 'you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation'⁴.

However, just as a theological understanding of the seafarer's eternal need to 'fear God and give him glory, ... and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water' prompted Christians to an earnest, loving concern for the seafarer's spiritual needs, an appreciation of the seafarer's personal hardships evoked in those same Christians a loving concern for the seafarer's material needs. Eventually the Society's first Object was reworded to read, '... the spiritual, moral and physical well-being of seafarers of all races at home and overseas'.

Our commitment⁵ to the Biblical principle, 'It is not ourselves that we proclaim, we proclaim Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake'⁶, is a faithful expression of this Object and one which we desire to shape every aspect of our ministry.



MtS Secretary- General visits Sydney

In August, The Mission's new Sec.-Gen., The Rev. Andrew Wright, spent a couple of days in Sydney en route to Townsville for the MtS Australian



Conference. It was Andrew's first visit to Australia and I was invited to show him around our lovely Harbour City and introduce him to some Mission personnel and some of our key benefactors. It's a

⁴ (Rev. 5:9, ESV)

⁵ *The Mission to Seafarers Ministry Staff Manual Chapter 1.* CD ROM, January 2006

⁶ 2 Corinthians 4:5

long flight - even with a stop-over in Singapore - and Andrew was very weary when he arrived.

After a 'kip' at his motel and a harbour-side lunch, we travelled to Manly and back on the ferry before touring the Opera House. After another 'kip' we had dinner with members of our Staff and Board before he 'hit the wall' and retired for a good night's sleep.

The next morning I drove him to Newcastle MtS via the Australian Reptile Park so that he might be able to discover how many ways he could die courtesy of Australia's wildlife! I resisted the strong temptation



to ply him with gruesome stories of our killer koalas (aka 'drop-bears') and rabid vampire possums!

This cheered Andrew immensely, so we continued to Newcastle MtS where he was welcomed by the staff, who took him on a 'dry' guided tour of the Vineyards before I met him and dragged him back to Sydney.

The Biennial Australian National Conference

The following day, Chaplain Jong Jo and I flew to Townsville to attend the MtS National Conference.

Perhaps the greatest value of these Conferences lies in the opportunities to meet and share with other Chaplains, many of whom minister in remote locations where a sense of personal, as well as geographic, isolation can be a constant challenge.

I am really humbled by these men and women who minister so faithfully and cheerfully in such difficult circumstances, often with little recognition or support.

I believe that the chief purpose of an MtS Conference should be to return the Chaplain or other delegate to his/her Centre refreshed, enthused and better equipped for their ministry.



MtS Conferences should do for Chaplains what Chaplains seek to do for seafarers!

Consequently, they should be characterised by Biblical teaching, sharing and prayer. Chaplains need to have opportunities to be refreshed by breathing in God's Word and by being able to share with fellow-Chaplains who will commit to support and hearten them by spiritual and material means.

Although it can be very helpful for our ministries to be better informed of the 'state of play' in the shipping industry, such knowledge is always a 'means to an end' in as much as it helps us to be better aware of how we may best present our ministry so that we 'scratch' where seafarers 'itch'.

Many of the Chaplains attending this Conference were fairly new to the Mission and found it a tremendous time, wherein they gained a sense of 'family' and loving care. It was also the first MtS Australia Conference for our new leaders - Sec. Gen. Andrew Wright and our new Chairman / Liaison Bishop, the Rt Rev. Dr Chris Jones - and it provided an invaluable opportunity for them to get a feel for the 'dynamic' of the Mission and to spend time with folk who, hitherto, may have been only a name and a photo.

Are you on Email?

If you have an email address, would you prefer to receive 'The Master's Mariner' by email?

If you would like to do so, please email me at 'sydney@mts.org.au' with your name and suburb so that we might transfer your details onto a new

email roll. Emailing, instead of posting, will save us quite a lot of time and money!

A Welcome Complaint!

In the previous issue of 'The Master's Mariner', I neglected to include a donation form. Whoops! Because of my lapse, I received a number of gentle chidings from readers but, despite my lapse, we still received a number of donations! Some readers may have likened it to going to church but not having an offertory plate / bag passed around (of which I've been guilty once or twice in my parish days!). We are very pleased that so many folk took pity on the Mission for having such a forgetful leader and gave generously all the same! Thank you!

If you elect to receive TMM as an email, the donation form will come as an attachment with it.

A Welcome Nomination!

In 2012, we were nominated - and then short-listed - for the International Committee for Seafarers' Welfare (ICSW) Award for 'Seafarer Centre of the Year'. Because we were 'homeless' for much of the year, this nomination meant a great deal to us. ICSW has now become ISWAN (International Seafarers' Assistance Network) and we are delighted again to have been nominated for the 'Seafarer Centre of the Year Award'. The significant thing about these awards is that the nominations must come from seafarers. We don't know who nominated us, but it is a great compliment to be so highly regarded by the seafarers to whom we minister. We won't know any more until well into the New Year but, if we should win, I think you can be confident that you'll hear about it!

Christmas - So What?

On 14th July 1789, just 18 months after the first fleet arrived in Sydney, a Parisian cobbler named Jean Lenoir finished his day's work. As was his custom, he made a diary entry of anything interesting or significant that had happened that day.

On that day he wrote, "*Nothing of importance happened today*". Yet, on that very day - and only a few streets away - an angry mob had attacked the infamous Bastille and freed its prisoners, thus beginning the French Revolution. France was never the same again. Not only French history, but also world history, was changed forever.

Yet Mr Lenoir had written, "*Nothing of importance happened today*"!

In Bethlehem, on that day so long ago, the town was full and very busy. A Census meant that everyone who'd ever been born in Bethlehem (and who was still alive!) was in town seeking accommodation.

The place was crawling with locals, visitors, officials and soldiers. Yet none of them realised that, a few streets away - or perhaps just next door in a barn behind the local pub - the most important birth in human history was in the throes of taking place.

Yet, to most people, nothing of importance would have happened that day. The only ones who were alerted to the fact that something momentous was happening were a group of shepherds - in Jesus' day a despised and dishonourable occupation.

Yet that's just what the Old Testament had foretold, not only with regards to his birth but with regards to his whole life.

No-one would ever guess Jesus' true identity, nor would they ever guess the importance of what he came to do. God himself would have to make it known to them.

Some 600 years before Jesus' birth, God spoke through a man named Isaiah, saying that God Himself would come to save His people. Although a glorious King, this divine Saviour would live as a humble, suffering servant. Isaiah wrote:

Isaiah 52:13-15 '*Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. As many were astonished at you - his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind - so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand.'*

Isaiah 53:1-12 '*Who has believed what they heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that

brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.'

Jesus was born to his task and empowered by His Father to achieve it. He was despised and rejected but he perseveres to death, concluding a life deemed by all to be a complete & utter failure.

And yet it is only when he rises from death - and the effects of His triumph begin to be applied to people's lives and they are spiritually reborn - that people begin to realise the magnitude of what has happened and start to comprehend who this despised 'heretic' really is.

In complete contrast to all their expectations, Jesus is indeed the Saviour King for whom they had been waiting for so long. Yet, like so many throughout history, they had read the Scriptures through the filters of their own Jewish nationalism and had completely missed the true picture.

Jesus hadn't fitted their nationalised portrait of the One who was to come, so they declared him to be a fraud and killed him.

But in so doing they fulfilled what God had said they would do. Although they denounced Jesus as an enemy of God, He fulfilled the work God had sent him to do. He absorbed and paid in full the penalty

for our rebellion against God, so that all who would entrust themselves to Him will enjoy - with Jesus - God's complete forgiveness. Jesus proved this to be true as he conquered death, rising visible and triumphant from the grave and, six weeks later, visibly returned to His glory in heaven.

The world has never been the same again. Throughout history, countless millions of people have testified to the new, transformed lives they've received from Jesus.

If, however, on that 'Good Friday' so long ago, you were to ask the people of Jerusalem, 'Who was that man with the crown of thorns who was crucified today?'

You'd almost certainly be answered with a contemptuous, 'No-one important' - just as they may have said in Bethlehem thirty odd years before.

It seems to be a quality of human nature that we go after what glitters brightest or what shouts loudest or what seems most urgent, even when they are not the most important!

We see it all the time in families but we see it most seriously in people's neglect of their relationship with God. Everything else seems more urgent - or more exciting - or less intimidating.

Sadly, we become so busy and distracted with the planning and the celebrating that we miss the reason for the celebration - 'that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them' 2Corinthians 5:19

The commercialism and sentimentality of Christmas provides an effective and convenient foil to thinking about 'Him'. Yet celebrities constantly tell us 'This is the real meaning of Christmas!' What a load of nonsense!

Jesus' birth was so important that our years are dated from it, yet it came with such gentleness, such quietness, and with so little fuss that most people still miss it.

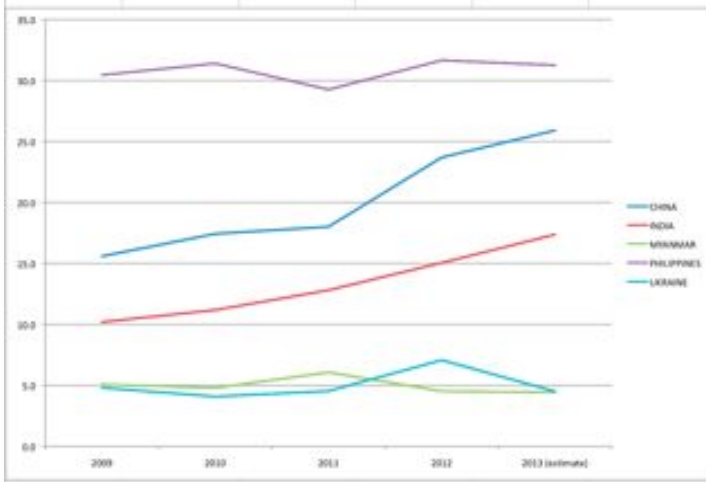
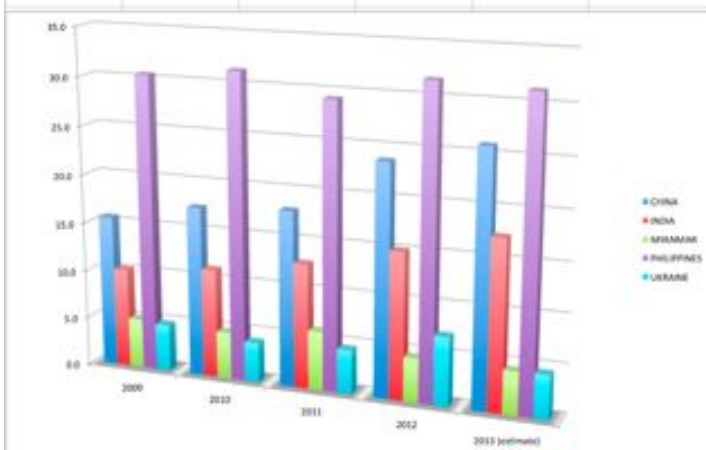
Please, don't be the one who misses out on God's free offer of reconciliation! Take time out from 'Christmas' and:

- read one of the Gospels;
- meditate upon the wonder of God's gift;
- join a Christian congregation where the Bible is well taught and you are encouraged to invest your life in the life of the risen Lord Jesus.

Changing Trends

The following table and graphs show the changing percentiles of our five major nationalities from 2009 - 2013:

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 (estimate)
CHINA	15.6	17.4	18.0	23.7	25.9
INDIA	10.2	11.2	12.8	15.0	17.4
MYANMAR	5.1	4.8	6.1	4.5	4.4
PHILIPPINES	30.4	31.4	29.3	31.7	31.3
UKRAINE	4.8	4.1	4.3	7.1	4.3



During recent years, we had felt that the percentage increase of Chinese and Indian seafarers had coincided with a percentage decline in the number of Filipinos, and our attendance figures show that this is correct. Because the total number of seafarers has decreased, the total number of Filipinos has also decreased proportionally. However, because the total numbers of Chinese seafarers in 2009 is almost identical to their total number in 2013, the reduction in 'all seafarers' attendance between 2009 and 2013 means that the increase of Chinese seafarers is in the order of 66% ($25.9 \div 15.6$). Indians have increased by c.71%, whereas Filipinos have increased only 3%.

Because the Chinese seafarers' favourite Chinatown purchases were doonas, powdered milk and health care products, we decided to stock the same goods (buying directly from the manufacturers) and to sell at reduced profit margins in order to undercut Chinatown's prices. Recently we became an 'agent' for 'Nature's Care' health products, which are sought out by Chinese seafarers. Word is getting around that we are *the* place to buy these goods in Sydney and our sales are going very well. The credit for these initiatives must go to Chaplain Un Hui Tay, whose contacts, Asian language abilities and entrepreneurial skills have made these developments possible.

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Donations over \$2 to the Welfare Fund are tax-deductible.

'For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.' Ephesians 2:8,9.