

The Master's Mariner

December, 2014



Caring for seafarers
around the world

A Politically Incorrect Christmas

By Ian Porter

In Australia it's a mark of 'political correctness' - to say 'all religions are basically the same'. It's a mantra for people who've never studied any of the religions' texts!

Those who see all 'faiths' as equal are praised for their 'tolerance' and 'inclusiveness', but those who claim otherwise - especially those who claim that only one is true - are denounced as 'fundamentalists' and 'narrow'.

Despite such pressure, the question still stands: 'Is there anything about Christianity that makes it absolutely unique?' Is there a core quality that so distinguishes Christianity from other faiths that it actually stands in contrast to - rather than in comparison with - them?

One distinction, albeit secondary, is that Christianity is the only faith that does not impose dietary restrictions upon its members. Not during 'Lent', not on 'Good Friday', nor on any other day!

However, the uniqueness of Christianity is not due to dietary freedom - it is due to the profound, absolute, uniqueness of Jesus.

When Jesus said:

*'I am the way, and the truth, and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through
me.'* (John 14:6),

he defined Himself as unique -

*'No one comes to the Father except through
me.'*

Jesus' coming perfectly expressed that which sets Christianity in contrast to all religions - i.e. the wonderful concept of 'grace'.

Whereas every other faith seeks 'salvation' (however they define it) via human initiative and effort, only Christianity declares such initiatives and efforts to be completely and utterly useless, stressing that God's acceptance of a person is possible only because of His gracious initiative and effort:

'And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, ... among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved - and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

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 2:1-9)

That is why Christians speak of:

- 'being saved'
- God's mercy and grace
- security and assurance

We cannot speak of ourselves as having earned God's acceptance, but only as humble recipients of His mercy. This is why our lives are to be lived as a thanksgiving to God for what He's done for us in Jesus. Christians cannot claim any credit for being saved - for we '*were dead in our trespasses and sins!*'

It's not because of anything we've done for God, rather it's what God has done for us in Jesus Christ!

'in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, ... For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.'
(2Corinthians 5:19-21)

When we meditate on it, the magnitude of God's grace - His mercy - will stagger our comprehension.

We will learn that God's saving work did not begin at that first Christmas; it began in the paradise of Eden with a promise to Satan that a descendent of Eve would crush him.

As God revealed more and more of Himself to His people, He revealed more and more of his purposes and plans, and spoke of One who would come and, in perfect love and with perfect justice, do for us that which we could never ever do for ourselves.

This Rescuer / Saviour would be a descendant of King David and be born in David's city - Bethlehem. He would epitomise all that Israel should have been, but was not.

Just as mankind's history is one of rebellion against God, Jesus' presence in this world evoked hostility and divisions.

'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.'

Isaiah 53:3-12

The name 'Jesus' (= Hoshea; Yeshua; Joshua) means 'God saves'.

It states **who** Jesus is and **what** He came to do.

This is the reason for Christmas!

-----|-----

Chaplain Jong Nam Jo

After nearly nine years with The Mission to Seafarers, Sydney, Chaplain Jong Jo retired on Saturday 6th December.



My first contact with Jong came when he rang the Mission to enquire about opportunities for voluntary work. Upon hearing that he'd just completed his course at the Sydney Missionary & Bible College, I 'brought him on board' asap! After Jong started, it quickly became apparent that he was a godly man with wonderful ministry gifts. A few months later, when a part-time ministry position became available, Jong's

eagerness and availability to fill the vacancy provided a golden 'win-win' opportunity for him and for The Mission.

The more immersed one becomes in the Bible, the more our awareness of its many personalities comes to resonate - for better and for worse! - with our awareness of our own character, and with characters of others. The little book of Ruth describes a man named Boaz as being 'a man of noble character / excellence'. He is well known for his loyalty, integrity, courage and strength of character.

Like Boaz, Jong is 'a man of noble character / excellence' and has been a great blessing to all of us serving with The Mission and to the many thousands of seafarers to whom Jong has ministered.

I must confess that I cannot understand how anyone can be passionate about golf (*well done, Ian - you've just lost half your supporters!*), but Jong and many Ships' Masters are keen golfers; Jong has often used his passion for golf to connect with - and minister to - many Ships' Masters. It is an indication of his commitment to ministry that these 'sessions' have often been in his own time, quite early in the morning, and quite a distance from his home!

Aside from his ministry gifts, Jong's building and carpentry skills (he was a builder before entering full-time ministry) have been greatly appreciated as well, in and around the Mission.



Jong has taught me a great deal about carpentry as he helped me re-build our back deck at home and as we built furniture for the small MtS Chapel in The Sydney Seafarers' Centre at Matraville.

More importantly, each of us at The Mission have learned a great deal about godliness from seeing his quiet, humble, unobtrusive manner of life and ministry. It is a mark of his character that his chief motivation for retirement is a desire to be able to spend more time with his wife, Su, in prayer, Bible Study and local ministry. He's also fairly keen to spend more time with his grandchildren!

I know that I speak for all of here at The Mission when I say, 'We thank God for his ministry among us and hope that, after a time, we may see him here again in a voluntary context.'

After 6th December, we will need someone who - in addition to having a love for Gospel ministry - also knows how to make a good cup of coffee!



Jong sharing with seafarers from Hansa Rendberg

As a postscript, Jong's final few days with The Mission were a wonderful reminder to him of God's extraordinary grace in action.

On 30th November, Jong visited a vessel and was welcomed by the Captain, who invited Jong to have lunch with him as he had many questions about the Gospel and wanted to speak with Jong about them. The Captain confessed that, before his marriage, he had masqueraded as a Christian in order to woo his wife but had abandoned this façade after his marriage. Nevertheless, his wife and relatives had never ceased to love and pray for him.

Jong's visit coincided with the climax of a 'burning agitation' within the Captain as he wrestled with questions that he could not answer for himself.

As their conversation developed, the Captain came to understand the truths about God's

righteous Judgement and our complete inability to undo the sins that condemn us. In the face of such despair, the Captain was even more blessed to be able to understand and appreciate that the only way we can be released from this eternal death sentence is for it to be paid in full for us by another.

No amount of imperfect, finite lives are able to pay such a penalty before a God of such perfect righteousness. God's perfect solution was to satisfy His perfect righteousness by the full expression of His perfect love. In perfect love, God would, Himself, pay the death penalty to which He had sentenced us. The death of Jesus - God incarnate - paid in full the debt owed by us to God.

God's perfect love fully satisfied God's perfect justice. Finally, by God's amazing grace, the Captain understood and, as God embraced him as a son, the Captain embraced God as Father and Jesus Christ as Lord. On 30th November 2014, the Captain was 'born again' and - in addition to his family of faithful pray-ers, heaven's angels shouted for joy, praising God for His breathtaking mercy!

On this wonderful note, Jong concluded his formal ministry with The Mission to Seafarers, Sydney. He and the Captain have, however, exchanged emails and phone numbers and Jong will continue to meet with him when his ship returns to Sydney - so the ministry continues! Stay tuned!

Chaplain George Gayagay

It is a heart-warming experience when we can do something to meet the desperate needs of Seafarers. A Russian Captain and his wife came to The Mission for the sole purpose of sending money to their daughter in Russia via our Western Union facility. They said she needed the money urgently and was literally waiting by the phone for her parents to call to say that it had been sent.

It was evening and I was alone in the Centre. I had not sent money via Western Union before and those staff who were familiar with the procedure were either driving seafarers to the Port Botany, or off duty, or on leave.

Consequently, I suggested that it might be wise for to wait until a more experienced

person was on hand to make sure the money was transferred successfully. The Captain's stress was apparent as he told me angrily, '*Don't try it, just do it!*'



Thankfully, we have detailed instructions printed out for us to follow and I followed them with great care! After the process had been completed, the Captain and his wife waited nervously until - thirty minutes later - their daughter confirmed that she had received the money. The difference in the parents' stress levels was immediately evident as she came back to me at reception with big smiles of relief, saying, 'It was done. Thank you very much, our daughter received the money'. I'm not sure who was most relieved - the parents, their daughter, or me!

Recently, I visited a vessel at the Bulk Liquids Berth at Port Botany. The vessel's crew are all Filipinos and I was aware that, although the vessel had been in port for two days, none of the crew had come ashore.

It was the crew's first voyage to Sydney and - after a month at sea - their greatest desire was to communicate with their loved ones.

When I reached the top of the gangway and introduced myself, the first question the guard asked me was, '*Do you have internet phone cards?*'. When - as required - he called the Captain to inform him that a MtS Chaplain is visiting, I heard Captain say, '*You ask him if he has brought Internet phone cards!*'

When I entered the mess room, I was mobbed by the crew, who thought that I was awash with phone cards. Although they were mistaken, we can arrange for SIM Cards to be delivered via our next bus, and the details of

Recharge Cards to be phoned through to me while I was here.

It was important for them to receive the R&R benefits of going ashore, so I encouraged them to seek permission to take some shore leave to distress and contact home.

Looking around the mess room, it was wonderful to see and hear so many seafarers delighting to speak with their wives and children back home.

For the next few days the seafarers used up quite a few recharge cards as they and their families soaked up the joys of reconnecting!

These small expressions of care may not seem much when compared with the joy of a seafarer entrusting his life to Jesus Christ; but it is precisely these things that give us the credibility that so often opens the 'doors' to life-saving conversations about the Lord Jesus and our desperate need for his forgiveness and transformation.

Are you on Email?

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

If so, please email us at 'sydney@mts.org.au' or flyingangelsydney@gmail with your name and suburb so that we might transfer your details onto a new email roll.

Emailing will save us quite a lot of time and money!

Some Statistics

Between 1st Jan. and 30th Nov. 2014, we:

- welcomed **7,328** seafarers to our Ministry Centre in Miller's Point;



- provided **1,340** free return bus trips between Millers Point and Port Botany, involving some 54,500kms of travel; and



- visited crews on board **429** Vessels.



**Seafarer Attendances: % by Nationalities:
January 2009 to November 2014**

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	1-11 2014
CHINA	15.6	17.4	18.0	23.7	25.9	26.4
INDIA	10.2	11.2	12.8	15.0	17.4	15.9
MYANMAR	5.1	4.8	6.1	4.5	4.4	5.3
PHILIPPINES	30.4	31.4	29.3	31.7	31.3	28.3
UKRAINE	4.8	4.1	4.5	7.1	4.5	4.8

Our Needs

We are incredibly grateful to you who support our ministry with prayer and donations, for without you our ministry would be very difficult indeed. As supporters, it is important for you to be kept informed of our joys and needs, so that your support will be more effectively utilised.

At the moment, we employ:

- one full-time Principal Chaplain;
- three full-time Assistant Chaplains;
- one part-time Assistant Chaplain;

- one part-time Accountant - who also works as a part-time driver.

The three Assistant Chaplains are very active in crew-visitation. Nevertheless, all Chaplains assist in those other ministries (e.g driving, reception / shop) that are essential in keeping our Centre operational.

Unfortunately, the difficulty in attracting and securing committed Christian volunteers means that Chaplains must multi-task more than ever. Since 2009, we have lost six staff members through retirements and deaths but, due to financial constraints, we were able to replace only one of these staff members. Since then, we have been unable to replace *any* of those who have gone from us.

We have also lost six volunteers through deaths and retirements.

It sounds like MtS is a dangerous place to work, but our staff and volunteers are extraordinarily faithful and long-serving. Eventually, after such long ministries, age does weary them and, eventually, their earthly days come to an end.

Currently, we are blessed by the voluntary assistance of four volunteers, one of whom serves for four evenings per month, and three others who, together, assist us for one evening per month. We desperately need more Christian volunteers who wish to serve the Lord Jesus by assisting us in this capacity!

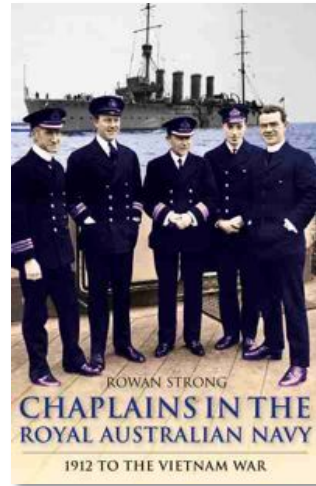
Our inability to replace five of the six staff members whom we have lost has meant that we were forced to reduce our operational hours and the number of daily bus runs to and from Port Botany. Yet, despite these restrictions, the quality of our ministry was of such excellence that we received the Lloyd's List DCN 'Seafarer Welfare Award' in 2011 and were short-listed for a world-wide 'Seafarer Centre of the Year Award' in 2012.

We also decided (in response to seafarer requests) to extend our operating hours so that our bus runs are more closely aligned with the lunch schedules of seafarers, so that their waiting time for our bus is minimised and their time away from the port is maximised. For a team already 'stretched', the decision to extend our hours in this way indicates the

dedication of the staff whom you support with such prayerful generosity - Thank you!

Book Review

The blurb says, "*Known in naval slang as 'sin-bosuns', chaplains have served as an integral part of the Royal Australian Navy for a*



century. From Keith Mathieson, who supported his shipmates in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp, to the first Australian navy chaplain to be killed in active service, George Stubbs on HMAS Sydney, this book profiles chaplains

serving at sea and in naval establishments, both in war and peace. Rowan Strong examines the chaplains' role as religious ministers, counsellors, and clergy prepared to challenge naval culture from a religious standpoint. He also looks at the forces of change, including denominational rivalry and cooperation, tensions between religious and military roles, and shifts in Australian society. Royal Australian Navy chaplains have sought to serve both God and country; this book reveals the difficulties and successes of that task."

THE MISSION TO SEAFARERS, SYDNEY

ACN 000 652 479
ABN 91 451 928 534

Street & Postal Address: GF 24 Hickson Rd, Millers Point,
NSW 2000

Telephone: +61 (0) 2 9241 3009

Fax: +61 (0) 2 9247 0410

Email: sydney@mts.org.au or
flyingangelsydney@gmail.com

Global Website: www.missiontoseafarers.org

Direct Debits:
(General A/C) BSB 062 074 Account 1000 8038
(Welfare A/C) BSB 062 074 Account 1000 8062

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