



The Master's Mariner September 2020

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A GREETING FROM REV UN TAY

Dear Supporters & Friends,

Since the lockdown at the end of March 2020 we continue to see and hear about considerable numbers of seafarers being stranded in major cities, for extended periods of time whilst awaiting repatriation.

Many others have had their contracts extended from 9 months to 14 - 18 months, forcing them to remain on their vessels. With authorities banning seafarers from disembarking their vessels when berthed at our ports, many are sending out distress calls and crying out for help and assistance.

This pandemic has and is causing tremendous stress and anxiety amongst seafarers around the world. There has been an increase in the cases of seafarers suffering from depression and mental health issues, resulting in an increased number of suicides and attempted suicides.

How are we at the Mission to Seafarers, along with the support of our partners, continuing to support and assist these seafarers, on whom we all rely, during this crisis?

REV TAY'S NATURE, RETAIL & SOCIAL THERAPY

What is meant by this? Due to lockdowns, stranded seafarers literally spend 24/7 in their confined hotel rooms, with no means to travel around. They are afraid of getting lost and of course, with COVID-19 still prevalent, they feel

safe in their hotel rooms. But how long can one stay in these conditions and remain sane?

Nature Therapy - We offer to take them on outings around our beautiful city. The chaplains and volunteers have, and continue, to take them to La Perouse, Coogee, Maroubra, Bondi, Watsons Bay and even to Kurnell to visit Captain Cook's memorial. Whilst out, it is evident how happy they are. They appreciate the nature and the wonderful creations of our Creator. And enjoy the time being spent away from their hotel rooms.



Retail Therapy - Seafarers love visiting shopping complexes. Just walking around, browsing freely through the shops, is therapeutic and good for their wellbeing, allowing them to feel like normal people again rather than prisoners.

Social Therapy - Being locked down in a hotel is very difficult. We need to socialize. By bringing the seafarers to our Mission or window shopping gives them the opportunity to mix with others. We accompany them, we walk and talk with them, they feel like part of the family. This also enables us to have greater opportunities to share the love of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ!

SHOPPING SEAFARER STYLE

By Chaplain Jim Watt

The job of serving seafarers has morphed into services quite different from what we did before Covid. It is sometimes hard to recognize that we are still chaplains, especially when our tasks more resemble the actions of a gang of shopaholics. What was once only a consumerist delight has now fallen into the hands of the Mission to Seafarers. The fact that seafarers are confined on the docks in their ship means they are no longer able to go on their Sydney shopping sprees. Before Covid I would have been hard pressed to give you the price of a Casio watch or a pair of JBL headphones, now I know the prices of most models and where you can get them. Staff at Harvey Norman, JB HiFi and other retailers now recognize me when I am prowling their premises on the hunt for the latest prizes. They can still have a look of disbelief when I order 24 pairs of wireless headphones and only in black or blue thank you. White and pink simply do not cut it.



These excursions remind me of shopping at Coles pre Covid and having boxes of chips and chocolate overflowing from my trolley much to the consternation of other shoppers who obviously realized it was all for my private consumption. The 24 headphones were purchased by the captain to treat his crew and thankfully it's not the first time that captains have cared for their crew in this way. There is a Polish story below that exemplifies such generosity. Anyway, I had to get the headphones from more than one supplier because retailers don't always have the right amount or exact item that seafarers would like. Some of the requested

goods are only available online and their request has not come in advance enough to complete an online transaction. It does mean for some hurried purchases as we seek to get suitable substitutes in time for the arrival or departure of the ship concerned.

As we have grown into our shopping roles, we have trained some ships to give us time to get the goods. Some supply Excel sheets with items allocated to the 20 or so seafarers requesting. Others send us photos on WhatsApp and as the list grows it can be a tad confusing. Twenty-five photos spread over a week with cancellations and additions to boot means my mathematical talents are on the improve. I do feel obliged to try as hard as possible to buy what they want because no matter how essential or non-essential the item may be, it will be a blessing to the seafarer who receives it. The gratefulness of the men at the gangway who receive the goods is apparent. They thank us very much and I believe some would even kiss us if social distancing and face masks weren't in practice.

There was one delivery of about \$700 worth of Polish smallgoods when I had to wait in the wind for almost half an hour. I thought they were upset with the products or couldn't get the money together. As it turned out it was merely the busy captain so wanting to thank me personally for the all-day effort in obtaining such high-quality goods. My wife has a Polish workmate who knew the personal phone number of the owner of 2 Polish delis and this was extremely helpful when his shops were closed on Mondays, the only day I had to get the goods. The workmate was also helpful in translating the request for items such as 6 kilos of Zywiecka sausage or 20 packets of Dr Oetker Cukier Waniliowy. I was finally able to get the Captain to speak with the deli owner and much Polish banter ensued. A pickup was organized that evening which completed the order and enabled the mainly Polish crew to celebrate. It really is worth it all in the end.

So if you have need of where you can get a pair of runners, a laptop, a smartphone, an inverter welder, a kangaroo scrotum bottle opener or merely a tasty Polish sausage just call Jim at the Mission to seafarers and I'll let you know!

Some excerpts taken from the August 2, 2020 edition of **Business Insider Australia**

'I think I will commit suicide': Cargo ship workers have been trapped at sea for months because of COVID-19, banned from ports, and predict 'anarchy' if things don't change

MIA JANKOWICZ

- An estimated 300,000 cargo ship workers are currently trapped at sea by the coronavirus pandemic, and many are speaking out about the grinding monotony and possible accidents.
- Goods continue to be shipped from port to port, but many seafarers themselves haven't been on land for months due to border closures and regulations.
- Seafarers have reported having to shave their heads when their ship ran out of shampoo, while one captain had to pull teeth from two crew members despite having no dental training.
- Even as countries begin to open up their borders, there are immense logistical difficulties in organising a crew change

Cargo ship workers are warning of a looming disaster as some 300,000 people are effectively trapped at sea in the coronavirus pandemic.

Multiple sources told Business Insider about conditions onboard, where some workers have not been on land for more than a year.

Seafarers spoke of mounting suicidal thoughts, and described a "ticking time bomb" for potential accidents, in a report published in June by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF).

The federation is a group of trade unions, whose members represent around 30% of the global seafaring workforce.

As countries closed their borders during the pandemic, thousands of workers – who transport 90% of the world's goods – were forced to work or remain on board long beyond their contracts, which usually run for four to six months.

Even as many countries reopen, shipping firms are struggling to arrange for new crew, which means everybody has to stay on board.

The workers keeping the world turning

On land, it seemed like the world ground to a halt during lockdown.

But the oil for energy, the food on supermarket shelves, the goods for Amazon orders, and medical supplies for hospitals all kept coming – because of cargo ship workers who mostly had no choice but to go on.

But as the pandemic continues, that is taking an immense human toll, in what the ITF described as a "humanitarian crisis."

"Sometimes I feel I won't survive"

The ITF surveyed 867 seafarers at the end of May, 70% of whom had been forced to extend their contracts.

Many spoke of mental health struggles, missing their families, and compared their situation to imprisonment or slavery.

One Swedish seafarer asked: "Would you lock the door to, for example, a factory to isolate people from COVID-19? Unless you are a ruthless dictator, you would most likely not even consider it."

A lack of access to medical care has also been an issue.

A captain ... has had to treat arthritis and – despite not being a dentist – pulled the teeth of two of his crewmembers.

Two seafarers said they had not been able to see family members who have since died onshore.

"Words are not enough to explain the hardships I've faced," an Indonesian seafarer said, after being at sea nine months. "Sometimes I feel I won't survive this period."

**SOME EXAMPLES OF ASSISTANCE FOR
STRANDED AND INJURED SEAFARERS**

- Seafarer from Cambodia – signed off from his vessel. Stranded 12 weeks in Sydney. Happily, back home
- Seafarer from India - Injured from incident on board. Two fingers crushed. Stranded for 5 weeks. Happily, back home
- Seafarer from China - Head injury. Stranded for 6 weeks. Happily, back home
- Seafarer from Philippines - Fractured right knee. Stranded for 6 weeks in hotel. Happily, back home!
- Seafarer from Philippines - On transit in Sydney for 2 days. Now on board the vessel. Happily working on board!
- Seafarer from Philippines - Suffered stroke on board. Admitted to Prince of Wales Hospital. In Sydney since June 25, 2020. Repatriated.
- Seafarer from Philippines - Right shoulder injury. In Sydney since June 7, 2020. Repatriated.
- Seafarer from China - Attempted suicide but unsuccessful. Signed off from Mackay. Transferred to Sydney since June 26, 2020. He was repatriated on July 24, 2020.
- Seafarer from India - Signed off due to eye problems. Receiving treatment at Sydney Eye Hospital. Not sure when he will be repatriated. In Sydney since July 7, 2020
- Seafarer from Philippines - Signed off after 15 months on board the vessel. In Sydney since July 6, 2020. Repatriated.



Volunteers – When once again possible

We will be looking for volunteers to partner with us as:

- Drivers who have a Light Rigid vehicle license, to drive our small buses
- people to help with researching potential companies to partner with us financially

Please contact us if you would like to assist.

Sydney Mission to Seafarers

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Tax deductible donations can also be made directly into our Bank Account:

BSB 062 074

Account 1000 8062

Cheques can be sent, however there may be a delay in processing as banking will only be done fortnightly.

As together we go through these troubling times, please continue to remember us and all seafarers in your prayers and financially through your donations, both regular and by creating a bequest through your will which is a special way you can continue to care for seafarers.

**Thank you, stay well and
God bless you all.**