



GOOD NEWS

From The Ministry to Seafarers



Hoping and Coping Through the Pandemic

by Patty Sarazen

In mid-March, the Montreal Seafarers' Centre closed when Transport Canada cancelled non-urgent shore leave for seafarers. Mariners' House laid off its entire staff, except Carolyn the General Manager who continues to work part-time on a volunteer basis.

Thankfully, chaplaincy continues at M2S with "socially-distant" visits on the gangway or at the base of the ship, through direct digital contact with seafarers, and through our app and social media channels. To a seafarer, chaplains provide vital contact with the outside world, hope in the midst of difficulty, and a reassuring presence in a foreign port.

Our role has shifted to running lots of errands for seafarers who remain trapped on board, even when they are in port. If the situation wasn't so dire some orders would just look comical!

- 54 bags of chips
- 120 chocolate bars
- toothpaste
- deodorant
- nutritional supplements
- art supplies
- video games



More than ever, seafarers are expressing their gratitude for the help, even while remaining frustrated at their plight:

"Thanks to Ministry for Seafarers - Montreal and priest David for visiting and rendering assistance for crew on board in time of Covid 19 restrictions. Even we cannot invite on board and share a cup of coffee. Crew of Nysted Maersk appreciated the help."

"Hardly anyone is recognizing the fact that if seafarers refuse to work amid this COVID-19 crisis...almost all supplies will stop all over the world. Everyone is showering praising on all the "Covid Warriors"... but not a single mention about us seafarers. Are we not risking our lives too by traveling around the world in this time of crisis...delivering essential commodities?"

The situation remains bleak for seafarers. After months at sea – many working beyond their contracts – there is still no global agreement on when they might be able to go home. There are few flights and lots of restrictions for travel. Seafarers have no choice but to remain on board.

We are presently working on a proposal that would allow us to reopen the Centre on a limited basis, for one ship at a time. With responsible and careful practices, we believe that this service could provide some hope, relief and comfort to seafarers, especially where their mental health is concerned.

We are also responding in prayer and with practical support. In our app, we have added a link to ISWAN's **SeafarerHelp** line – a free, 24-hour, multilingual helpline for seafarers and their families – as well as to ICMA's **Chat to a Chaplain** tool so seafarers can chat in real-time with a chaplain at any time. Michelle is one of the chaplains on duty and appreciates being able to connect with seafarers this way.

Praise & Prayer

Pray for seafarers, that shore leave restrictions would be lifted and that we'll be able to open the Centre for their benefit. Pray for the health and safety of our chaplains, too.

Pray that **SeafarerHelp** and **Chat to a Chaplain** would be well received and widely used to bring hope and relief to seafarers and their families.

Pray for discernment as we process training we had from **Disarm the Dark** on human trafficking.

We are committed to our budget goals and are focusing on grant writing, which is new for us. Pray we'll be quick learners, find favour with foundations and build new partnerships.

Praise for technology that allowed our Board to meet online in April!



Volunteers, Interns & Visitors

Volunteers bring great perspective and we learn from them all the time. After a hiatus of a few years, we enjoyed **Martin Mudde's** return. He commented, "I think the combination of full time staff and volunteers is very good. We need full time staff to nourish deeper relationships as this takes time and knowledge. Volunteers can help by offloading the staff, bringing some variety in background and help in building the support community." As a volunteer, that's just what he did!

Sheila Margerrison has been indispensable during the pandemic. Living just a few minutes' walk from the Centre, she has been able to do our weekly deposit while our Administrator is working from home.

Evert De Boer volunteers from a distance, helping to create and troubleshoot online content. **Donielle Goad** continues to post app content.

Two adult students, **Mandy Kaur** and **Ping Zhao** (pictured at right, top), completed their 60-hour retail internships, just before our Centre closed. Here they are delivering a personal package to seafarer Neil, whose friend flew to Montreal from Winnipeg and tried to connect with him. Alas, the ship was delayed until after her return flight so she asked us to do the delivery for her.

Over Spring Break, **Laura Wilson** brought a group of Terra Nova high school students (pictured at right, below) for a tour of the Port, lunch and educational talk. We didn't know it at the time but this was our first and likely last school group visit of 2020!

For now, we are not scheduling volunteers, interns or visitors. But do contact us if this interests you sometime in the future.



Training & Events



Here's to friendship! Seafarers give thanks to a donor who sponsored this event.



Sushi-making with Ping Zhao, our instructor. The wife of a ship's Chief Cook "attended" from the Philippines on an iPad!

Giving Goals

We are humbled and grateful that you have kept giving despite these challenging times. We don't take your generosity lightly and we are well aware that times are tough for so many. *Thank you!*

If you haven't yet given and are able to, why not join the **Great Canadian Giving Challenge** at CanadaHelps during the month of June and earn us the chance to win this national public contest (\$20,000 prize).

We are also specifically **looking for 5 donors** to become monthly givers (\$30) to cover the yearly cost of our app so that we can continue to offer seafarers Bible content, encouragement and hope.

