

GOODNEWS

From The Ministry to Seafarers

Pandemic Lessons: Learning to Lean Into the Pain

by Patty Sarazen

The crew from the *Glasgow Express* were the last ones to sign the welcome book at the Seafarers' Centre before the pandemic shut everything down. Four months later on July 15, they were some of the first seafarers to happily return! They told Chaplain Michelle that they enjoy their time in the Centre, and we sure were glad to see them back!

Although Transport Canada lifted shore leave restrictions in July, most seafarers are still stuck aboard their vessels due to fear, company policy, or even the preference of the captain. In August, we transported several seafarers who had not set foot on land in seven months! Unfortunately, this is not unusual.



Seafarers celebrating their first shore leave in 7 months!

The extended quarantine toll is evident: weary eyes, flat voices expressing hopelessness and a sense that it could take a long time before anything changes. The contracts of more than 300,000 seafarers have expired and yet they remain at sea, unable to access a crew change because there is no international agreement to treat seafarers like the essential workers that they are. They cannot pass through travel hubs to come and go as needed.

In her work as one of the chaplains staffing the 24/7 **Chat to a Chaplain** messaging service, Michelle has encountered desperate seafarers and their loved ones facing the pains of financial hardship, stresses at home and relational tensions

on board ship. She says, "I am also grateful to have chatted with a cruise ship seafarer who was thankful to be able to participate in online worship. I was able to pray with him."

As Christians, we're often tempted to cover the pain with a promise from the Bible. The reality is that what seafarers are presently living through is inhumane and we are grieved. We are leaning into that grief and asking God what He requires of us. We are grateful that God holds this pain and is working through us.

What does it look like to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God? Advocacy is one way to demonstrate our care and compassion so Michelle has been part of the initiative to get a Canada Seafarer Welfare Board established. Comprised of stakeholders from the maritime industry, it aims to provide care and improve the welfare of seafarers, especially their immediate needs of shore leave and crew changes. We are lending our **voice** to strengthen the chorus of calls for change.

We are staying focused on our **vision** to be transformed as we, with God's leading, build partnerships. When we realized that our partnerships were spreading out over the globe, we made some subtle changes to our Mission statement:

The Ministry to Seafarers (M2S) is dedicated to enhancing the lives of seafarers regardless of race, religion, gender or rank, through ship visiting, advocacy and hospitality; and showing Jesus' love by caring for the their physical, emotional, spiritual and justice needs.

Lastly, we are living out our **values** to respect diversity, be relationally committed, be rooted in the example of Jesus, to be flexible and creative and to persevere.

Thank you for sustaining us daily through our chaplaincy work as we try to accommodate the needs of seafarers — running errands for them, providing them with a word of encouragement at the gangway or aboard ship (if permitted),

handing out scriptures and other literature, selling phone cards and spending time in conversation and prayer.

"But how can they call on him unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent?"

I can never forget all what you have done for me and the other seafarers. Sunil P. (seafarer)

That is why the Scriptures say, 'How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!'" (Romans 10:14-15, NLT)

Events

Christmas Parcels

Our Christmas parcel campaign will proceed this year and we're delighted to have already heard that many of you intend to participate! The switch to Christmas bags was a huge success and made for a much easier delivery. We have a limited supply for sale. **Email us for details.**

REMINDER: The finished bags should be approximately 12" by 15". Visit www.ministrytoseafarers.org/parcels for an instructional video. We'll also be sending out more information about drop-off locations later this fall.

Pumpkin Carving

You're all invited to our pumpkin carving event!

Near the end of October we hope to invite the crew of one ship to our annual pumpkin carving event. You're invited to join us via Zoom! All you need is your own pumpkin and some enthusiasm! We'll carve together, enter all results into a draw and more importantly, share an evening of fellowship.

We cannot plan this event too far in advance because it will depend when a ship that allows shore leave is in port. **Email us if you'd like to be kept informed.**



Prayer Requests

Pray for seafarers' health and safety and for restrictions on shore leave/crew changes to be lifted.

Pray for discernment and wisdom as we make ongoing necessary pandemic adjustments to ministry.

Pray that the Christmas Parcel Drive would glorify God and bring joy to seafarers and donors. That the parcels would provide opportunities to share the Gospel.

Pray for some positive responses to the funding letters of inquiry we've sent to 31 different foundations.

Pray for the planning of a new fundraising event in October: the *Seaway Bike Tour Fundraiser*.

To pray monthly with us, visit our website to sign up for **LIFEBOAT**, our prayer guide. This guide has seven prayer requests for the whole month.

You'll find a link at www.ministrytoseafarers.org/prayer.

Michelle's 20th Anniversary at M2S

"20 years ago I moved to Montreal for what was supposed to be a 9-month internship with The Ministry to Seafarers. Over the past 20 years I have met many wonderful friends and colleagues from all around the world. There have been many changes in my life and in the ministry over the past 20 years but I am thankful that God has remained faithful throughout. Thank you to all my family and friends who celebrated with me."



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