

GOODNEWS

From The Ministry to Seafarers

Seafarer Vaccinations: An Historic Undertaking

by Michelle DePooter

Since July, more than 397 seafarers have received a vaccine in Montreal — the most of any port in Canada. In large part, this is due to our close collaboration with the Montreal Public Health Agency who manages the vaccine roll-out in our sector. We've established a good working relationship, have come up with a plan to share needed information, and we either bring seafarers to the clinic or bring the clinic staff to the Port for on-site vaccinations.

The team, led by Steve Machabee, is a formidable, organized group with a razor-sharp focus on inoculating as many people as possible. They have a small team specially trained to run mobile vaccination clinics and on August 3rd they gamely offered to climb the gangways and put their skills to use aboard three vessels. It proved to be a 7-hour Herculean effort and we quickly learned that it wasn't the most efficient way to immunize seafarers! Undaunted, we debriefed and came up with a new plan to set up in the parking lot at one of the terminals and to bring the crews from their ships to this mobile clinic. Success!

Although almost everyone in developed countries has gotten at least one vaccine, only 15%¹ of seafarers worldwide have been vaccinated. Coupled with the fact that more than 10% of seafarers have been onboard for more than 12 months, this has been an historic undertaking. We hope vaccines will lead to more freedom of movement for them.

Recently we heard from Jacob, a seafarer we've known for a long time. He reached out to say, "I was... COVID positive and was on life support for 10 days in the hospital very serious. I was given a lot of steroids I lost 32KGS in 9 days and was not able to walk or talk and was bedridden for 3 months. Now recovering but a lot of post-COVID complications that affect my health."



Chaplain David says, "I know other seafarers like Jacob, who got COVID while unvaccinated and are suffering from long-COVID so they cannot provide for their families right now. Everyone that we can bring for the vaccination can be protected from such devastating effects."

Patty, our Administrator adds, "Even though the situation in Canada is more stable than elsewhere, in most other parts of the world, seafarers are living in the pre-vaccine stage due to a lack of supply. Coordinating the vaccination campaign requires logistical gymnastics including managing transportation, facilitating documentation requirements and communicating with shipping agents, captains, crew, the clinic staff and within our own team. But seeing the grateful reaction of seafarers to receiving their jab provides me ample motivation to carry on. I feel humbled and honoured to be serving with Michelle and David in this way."

The words of a few ship captains sum up the general response we've had to these efforts:

"Thank you all for your valuable exchange of information, smooth planning and co-ordination for vaccination of our 23 crew members at Montreal on 05th August '21. Stay safe, stay happy, stay blessed!" — Captain Felino, QUEBEC EXPRESS



"Good day! Please note that today 17/7 in Montreal, about 11 crew members took 1st dose of Moderna COVID vaccination... Needless to say that the whole procedure and treatment seems to me up to very high standards and I could warmly recommend. The transport have been organized by Seamen's mission Mr. David that is helping us a lot in this hard times." — Niko Vuksanovic, Master / MV MSC LEIGH (reporting to his company)

We believe we've been able to make such great strides partly due to the regular meetings of Canada's National Seafarers' Welfare Board which was formed at the beginning of the pandemic. It identified vaccinations as a primary need and used its influence to ensure inoculations would be possible for all seafarers, both domestic and international.

Last year we asked you to pray for creativity and innovation in our efforts to help seafarers. We believe that these efforts came as a result of your prayers. **Thank you and please keep praying!**

Challenge '21 Update

There are just a few months left in our monthly challenges and it's not too late to join in with biking (Sep), poetry (Oct), Christmas parcels (Nov) and trying out other Christmas traditions (Dec). We'd love to see your pictures and hear about your adventures.

Visit www.ministrytoseafarers.org/c21 for details.

Christmas Parcel Campaign

It's not too early to start thinking about our annual Christmas Parcel Campaign. Last year, virtual parcels were a popular option and a huge success. More campaign details will follow in late September. In the meantime, to order cloth bags, please use the order form.

Reminder if you are sewing bags: The finished bags should be approximately 12" X 15". To keep the sizes standard, we ask that you follow the instructional video.

All information is at www.ministrytoseafarers.org/parcels.

TODAY for Seafarers Reprint

Volumes 1 and 2 of *TODAY for Seafarers* have proven to be popular with seafarers. Devotional entries are themed around the experiences that they face every day. Seafarer Ollicor sent us a photo of his devotional and writes, "I use to read dis always while I'm onboard...tnks for dis stuff dat really helps me grow more about Our Lord Jesus God bless ur Organization more."

Many chaplains distribute *TODAY for Seafarers* onboard ships and use them to begin conversations. We are reprinting both volumes and will be shipping them to seafarers' centers in Florida, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Texas and Vancouver. You can follow our community online @TodayforSeafarers. **Thank you for praying for a smooth distribution and that these booklets will be a blessing to many seafarers.**

NAMMA Conference

By Patty Sarazen

Seventy-five participants from seafarer ministries across North America gathered virtually during the annual NAMMA Conference to share experiences from the past 18 months centered on the theme, Leading and Learning through Uncertainty.

Michelle was on the planning committee and commented afterwards, "Everyone has been facing similar challenges in serving

seafarers and it was beneficial to share ideas and compare notes. Common topics of conversation included personal shopping for seafarers, logistics for vaccination and the lack of shore leave and crew changes. It was a blessing to be able to worship together, sharing our common faith and lifting our eyes up to the God that is greater than all these challenges."

Although we would have loved to gather in person, the virtual option was the next best thing and it was great to renew friendships and make acquaintances.

Volunteer and Intern Program

We have begun inviting local volunteers back to the Centre and will proceed slowly with relaunching our full program. **Thank you for keeping Sheila and Rob in your prayers.**

Thanks to a grant from NAMMA, we were able to hire a summer intern, **Morgane Sheppard**, who has been translating all our volunteer materials into French. We anticipated the need for this as we enlarge our territory to include the port in Sorel, QC.



Morgane Sheppard with seafarers.

Financial Update

Thank you for helping mitigate the losses of 2020 in this current year. Between your generous support and our cost cutting measures, we are showing a small deficit of approximately \$5700 year-to-date. Your continued support is essential to ongoing strength of the M2S ministry. **Thank you for praying for our financial needs and for God's provision.**

In addition to giving by cheque or on the [website](http://www.ministrytoseafarers.org), you can now also text **m2smtl** to 1-888-364-GIVE to make your donation.

Reminder: Christian Stewardship Services provides estate planning services and free advice to our supporters. They've recently launched an easy-to-use space where donors can manage their own Donor Advised Fund. We highly recommend their services to anyone who wishes to put a financial plan in place that includes faith and family. Visit <https://cssservices.ca/>.

¹ www.globalmaritimeforum.org/press/low-vaccination-rate-among-seafarers-suggests-neptune-indicator