



inside: Seafarers open up about mental health at sea
Plus: Building partnerships across India and more



Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols

2026

Tuesday 1 December 2026
All Hallows by the Tower & Trinity House
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Welcome to the latest edition of FAN!



When I last introduced FAN, the violence in the Arabian Gulf was already weighing heavily on seafarers and those who care for them. Sadly,

that situation remains deeply uncertain. Vessels continue to transit Hormuz under threat, while the shadow of war also falls across the Black Sea. In places such as Poti in Georgia, the crews we meet have seen vessels struck, know others affected, or carry the strain of conflict.

Those realities remain very much in our prayers and in our work. But in this edition, I hope you will also allow us to look more widely across the life of the Mission. Even amid global crises, seafarers elsewhere continue to face loneliness, hardship, separation from family and practical need – and our commitment to them is undiminished.

So, I am delighted to welcome you to this issue of FAN. In these pages, you will find stories from across our global family, and glimpses of the remarkable people who serve seafarers day by day. A privilege of my role is meeting them in person. Through this edition, I hope you will feel that you have met some of

them too – and that their dedication will encourage and inspire you as much as it does me. God bless them all.

The Ven. Dr Peter Rouch
Secretary General

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Maritime Mountain Race Success



Back in June, more than 90 maritime leaders converged on the Swiss Alps for our inaugural Maritime Mountain Race. Together, they raised an incredible \$506,000 to support our welfare operations in six locations, including Greece, Dubai and Georgia.

On the eve of the event, 32 teams from across the industry gathered near the picturesque village of Le Bouveret. With the majestic mountains and serene lake as a backdrop, colleagues relaxed and got to know one another, with a few even taking an evening dip in the lake itself.

But the next morning, they were ready to compete. Participants were up early to tackle one of two hiking and running

routes: the 11km 'Lighthouse' route, reaching an elevation of 951m, or the 16km 'Sails & Summit', which peaked at 1,076m.

They were focused on the task: to navigate the course in the fastest time possible as a team. But it wasn't just the distance and elevation that stood in their way. With temperatures reaching 30°C, the teams needed determination and resilience to complete the course.

Alongside the physical training, teams had also gone to extensive lengths to fundraise for the challenge. Their incredible efforts, alongside the

“ The spirit, determination and camaraderie we witnessed was remarkable”

support of our sponsors, including NorthStandard, BSM, Lloyd's Register, AET and HFW, helped us raise vital funds to support our work in ports.

So, what will that \$506,000 make possible for seafarers?

SUPPORT WHERE IT IS NEEDED MOST IN DUBAI

In Dubai, funding will help us employ a chaplain with expertise in justice and welfare. This new position will be significant in supporting seafarers facing issues such as abandonment and employment violations.

BUILDING OUR PRESENCE IN GEORGIA

In Georgia, our work in the ports of Poti and Batumi is still relatively new. Funding will help train ship visitors and volunteer



GROUP PHOTO OF THE MARITIME MOUNTAIN RACE WINNERS

drivers, and create a dedicated space where seafarers can gather, connect and access support.

GROWING OUR WELFARE SERVICES IN PIRAEUS

In Piraeus, Greece, one of Europe's busiest maritime hubs, our operations are also at an early stage. Funding will help us equip a centre where crew can access welfare support alongside practical items such as SIM cards, snacks and toiletries.



RACING FOR SEAFARERS

Speaking at the conclusion of the event, Jan Webber, our Director of Development, praised the efforts of all participants, saying, "The spirit, determination and camaraderie we witnessed across all 32 teams was remarkable, and the funds raised will make a real and lasting difference to seafarers in some of the most isolated corners of the world. This is exactly the kind of event that shows the maritime industry at its very best."

Plans are already underway for the next Maritime Mountain Race. If you'd like to take part or even sponsor the event, please get in touch with our events team at events@maritimemountainrace.org.

Mental Health at Sea: A Seafarer's Perspective

Seafarers are resilient, but that doesn't mean they never struggle. For seafarers spending months away from home, long working hours, isolation, challenges in their duties on board and homesickness all take a toll on mental health. So what helps? We asked seafarers to share their experiences.

JAY R DIVINA, CHIEF COOK

As a Chief Cook, the pressure can be especially difficult because the galley does not always follow the same working rhythm as other departments.

And, of course, being at sea means missing many of life's important moments with the people we love. The emotional weight of being away from family can sometimes be just as difficult as the workload itself.

For me, one of the ways I cope is by finding small moments for myself. After long and stressful working hours, I try to disconnect for a while – watching something funny, listening to music, talking with family, or simply having some quiet time. Being able to see and talk to our families gives us a sense of connection and reminds us that we are not alone.

But personal coping is only part of the solution. Mental health should not only be discussed when someone is already struggling. There should be an environment where seafarers feel comfortable saying, "I'm not okay," without being judged or treated differently.



It all boils down to deliberate connection



JAY R DIVINA, CHIEF COOK

RALP JAYSON TOLENTINO, 2ND OFFICER

Mental health at sea is shaped not only by a person's inner strength, but also by connection, working relationships and leadership.

For me, internet access is both a blessing and a challenge. It allows us to be in touch with our families, but too much connectivity can also be emotionally draining. We may receive troubling news, yet we cannot simply leave the ship. We are informed – but sometimes powerless.

When people respect each other, work together and look after each other, the vessel becomes a temporary home. As an

officer, I personally try to be the "glue" that helps bring everyone together.

Leadership is not limited to ensuring that work is completed. It means noticing when someone is unusually quiet, creating opportunities for the crew to connect and reminding people that they are valued.

The crew shirt we designed was an example of this. We made something that told the story of our trip. The back displayed the ports we had called at during 2025, similar to a band's tour shirt. During the holiday season, the shirt reminded us that we were one crew, sharing the same challenges, celebrations, and journey.



RALP JAYSON TOLENTINO WITH HIS CREWMATES

CAPT. ROI EMMANUEL D. VERASTIGUE, MM, AFNI, MASTER

Most of us carry the silent weight of knowing that, as life progresses back on land at a pace so swift without our presence, we, on the other hand, have to endure the life that is tethered to a monotonous scheme. One may ask, "How do you cope?"



Personal coping is only part of the solution



We made something that told the story of our trip

It all boils down to deliberate connection. Connection to oneself and with your community. The saying "no man is an island" is true, after all. Even something as simple as shared laughter during meals can make a huge impact. Go and try to transform your fellow crew from being mere co-workers into a tight-knit support network.

The Bible says, "A good tree does not bear rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree bear good fruit." If we are to liken our mind to a good tree that yields great thoughts and clear thinking, we have to, of course, keep the tree – or, in this case, our body in good shape.

Fundamentally, our mental wellbeing at sea relies on how effectively we bridge the gap from isolation to our community, to the people we love and the ones who genuinely care.



CAPT. ROI EMMANUEL D. VERASTIGUE, MASTER

A Century of Care in Singapore

Back in 1926, the widow of a harbour pilot made a donation to support the Mission's first chaplain in Singapore, helping launch a ministry that has supported generations of seafarers over the past 100 years.

In July, we celebrated the centenary of The Mission to Seafarers Singapore (MtSS) with a special dinner, bringing together committee members, industry leaders and Mission representatives from around the world.

As Lars Kastrup, Chairman of the MtSS Management Committee and CEO of Pacific International Lines, reflected, "Singapore's seafarers keep global trade moving, often at real personal cost, and it is our duty to make sure they are not forgotten."

A HISTORY OF CHANGE

Within a year of the first chaplain's appointment, additional funding helped establish our first centre on Anson Road. Over the following decades came further relocations, a pause in services during World War Two, and the opening of our centre on River Valley Road by HRH The Princess Royal in 1983.

Over the years, we have worked to bring our support closer to seafarers, making it easier for them to access the care and



CONNELL HOUSE ON ANSON ROAD, HOME TO MTSS IN ITS EARLY YEARS AND A POPULAR HUB FOR VISITING SEAFARERS

hospitality we provide, including through the recently reopened seafarers' lounge at Jurong Port.

STRIVING FOR MORE

Today, around 140,000 vessels pass through Singapore's waters each year, bringing millions of seafarers into the path of the Mission. We're connecting with around 20,000, but want to reach many more.

That's why we've launched the Centenary Appeal, aiming to raise S\$500,000 to expand ship visiting and anchorage outreach, so no seafarer misses out simply because they can't get ashore.

As Jan Webber, Director of Development, says, "A century ago, this Mission began with one chaplain and a simple promise: that no seafarer arriving in Singapore would be forgotten. That promise still guides everything we do."

SUPPORT THE MtSS CENTENARY APPEAL

For more information on how you can support the appeal, please visit: support.missiontoseafarers.org/singapore.

Solar Power: Reshaping MtS in Colombo

Pursuing sustainable energy is a win for both the environment and the seafarers the Mission serves in Sri Lanka, and beyond.



COLOMBO CENTRE ROOF

The story began in late 2024, when our centre in Colombo installed rooftop solar panels. Energy costs were rising and the Mission wanted a solution that would be kinder to the planet, so Sri Lanka's abundant sunshine made the choice an easy one.

"The solar panels were installed while Sri Lanka was in the grip of a serious economic and energy crisis, so for us, this has proved to be more than just a lifeline," explains Fr Perry Brohier, port chaplain in Colombo.

The investment paid off. Within 12 months, electricity-related emissions had fallen by 95%, while CO₂ emissions halved from 2.2 tonnes in 2024 to 1.1 tonnes in 2025.

HUMAN IMPACT

Sustainability initiatives sometimes feel like they are competing with frontline spending, but Colombo tells a different story. With the centre's electricity bill falling by 60%, money was reinvested directly into work with seafarers.

"The savings have opened up real space for seafarer welfare initiatives. Looking ahead, the option of electric vehicles has also been considered as a next step," continues Fr Perry.

GLOBAL UPTAKE

Ports in Panama, the UAE, Australia, Georgia and Indonesia are also going greener, using hybrid vehicles, thanks to an investment of around £123,000 from the ITF Seafarers' Trust.

"For us, this isn't simply about solar panels or reducing an electricity bill. It's about finding practical ways to make sure more of the resources entrusted to us can reach the seafarers we serve," says Revd John Attenborough, Regional Director for the Middle East and South Asia.

As Colombo has shown, going green doesn't just benefit the planet; it also means more resources for what matters most: being there for seafarers.



Partnership Investment Reaps Rewards in India

From maritime universities to duty-free shops, the Mission in India is building a web of trusted partnerships to ensure seafarers and their families get the right support, wherever they need it.

India is the third-largest supplier of crews, with more than 311,000 seafarers. “To think we could serve them all adequately on our own would be neither realistic nor sustainable,” says Revd John Attenborough, Regional Director for the Middle East and South Asia.

“Partnership is really important because you’re encouraging local people, local teams and other local entities to come on the journey with you,” he explains.



OUR CENTRE IN TUTICORIN, INDIA

PARTNERSHIPS BEGIN IN PORT

For the Mission, so much starts in port. Revd Nitin Dethe, who has been working in Mumbai since 2014, explains, “there was some initial scepticism when we were offering support for free.” But when ports saw there was no ulterior motive, opportunities began to open up.

That trust led to an invitation to serve seafarers inside the Flamingo Club, a duty-free shop. When the facility was demolished, the port approached the Mission and renovated an unused building for welfare support.

Today, a local union has responsibility for the seafarers’ welfare centre, but when it comes to delivering services, it’s Revd Nitin and his team they call upon.

SMALL CONNECTIONS, BIG IMPACT

Our staff, including Revd Nitin, Pastor Joel Das in Kolkata and Fr Stephen Thanapaul in Tuticorin, are building partnerships with local services,

port authorities, police, diocese, the International Transport Workers’ Federation and the International Seafarers’ Welfare and Assistance Network. Often these connections can seem disparate, but it’s when disasters strike that their value is clear.

Earlier this year, a Turkish seafarer aboard a ship at anchorage sent Revd Nitin photographs of serious abuse. Unable to reach the vessel before it sailed, Revd Nitin was in contact with local police, the navy and the ITF. Within hours, help was on the way. As Nitin observes, “it’s through these kind of partnerships we can escalate things.”

PARTNERING BEYOND THE PORTS

But partnerships don’t stop at the port gates. Seafaring is more than a job – it’s a lifestyle. That’s why the work of our Family Support Network (FSN), overseen by Fr Stephen in Tuticorin, is so crucial.

“Each village has its own unique characters and cultures and its own seafarers’ association,” Fr Stephen explains. The FSN works alongside existing structures in 18 communities, helping to establish sewing workshops,



A FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK SEWING WORKSHOP

“ They’re worth every hour of investment”

tutoring programmes and provide financial education and mental health support – provision they would be unable to access alone.

STARTING EARLY

And partnerships begin before seafarers board their first ship. In 2024, safeTALK training helped 253 cadets at the Indian Maritime University become Suicide Alert Helpers. Earlier this year, the Mission signed a partnership with the Academy of Maritime Education and Training in Chennai to deliver its WeCare programme to 3,000 cadets.

“Cadets have been taught how to handle ships, but not how to handle themselves when they’re going through a crisis,” explains Nida Fathima, the Mission’s new Welfare Officer. This partnership will ensure seafarers are well prepared for their demanding career.

Partnerships may take time, but they’re worth every hour of investment – helping us reach more seafarers with more services more quickly.

Port Reports

Our chaplains support seafarers in ports around the world. These updates offer a snapshot of their recent work.



1 REVD DILCE DE OLIVEIRA, PORT AÇU, BRAZIL

Getting on board is not always easy here. At one terminal, we depend on the captain's permission to visit, and the emails we send rarely receive a reply. Most requests come from ships we have served before, usually for transport so crews can take shore leave. While we cannot deliver goods on board, we always fulfil transport requests, and in July we took 26 seafarers ashore.

2 HELEN GLENN, HALIFAX, CANADA

In April, one particularly moving moment came when a supporter contacted me about her grandfather, Canon Brinley Williams, who served as Halifax port chaplain from 1955 to 1970 and built the chapel altar. I was delighted to find his photograph and memorial plaque in our chapel. His family are set to visit the Mission, including his daughter, on her 90th birthday.

This is evidence of the personal impact the Mission makes not only in the lives of those we work directly with, but their wider family too.



3 REVD CANON STEPHEN THANAPPAUL, TUTICORIN, INDIA

Restricted shore leave is a recurring concern for seafarers we meet. One able seafarer from Myanmar told me how much he wanted to visit Tuticorin, but was unable, "I love India, so beautiful. But I do not have shore leave."

I also supported two welfare cases, helping seafarers pursue unpaid wages and severance pay. Meanwhile, our family support work continues, with 92 students attending three tuition centres.



4 MONICA PARK, BUSAN, SOUTH KOREA

A highlight in July was the visit of HRH The Princess Royal. I was one of 16 people from the maritime community invited to meet her, and she showed interest in our work. We also celebrated Sea Sunday at our Flying Angel Seafarers' Centre with Holy Communion, followed by refreshments with those attending. Access to ships has been a challenge here, but we have made progress: with help from Busan Customs, we can now request permission to board some vessels ourselves.



5 MISAKI IWAI, TOKYO, JAPAN

Members of The "Seafarers' Human Rights Now Japan" have joined me for ship visits, which allows us to cover a wider area. They all have seafaring experience, which helps create a strong sense of camaraderie, encouraging seafarers to share their thoughts freely.

It was encouraging to revisit a silica sand carrier that we'd been on board during the Christmas season. I was surprised to find that one of the seafarers remembered our previous visit. It's concerning to hear that an overwhelming majority of young seafarers say they do not intend to continue their careers at sea. The primary reason is family separation, but salary is also an issue as the job comes with a harsh and dangerous working environment.



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We will send you regular updates about the work, needs and impact of The Mission to Seafarers.

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Seafarers Happiness Index

The latest Seafarers Happiness Index shows a further fall in satisfaction to 6.87/10, as everyday pressures wear down this resilient but stretched workforce.

The first quarter of 2026 was defined by the sudden shock of the conflict in the Arabian Gulf. The hoped-for recovery has not come and, as everyday pressures become the norm, the latest report marks a transition “from acute shock to chronic strain”.

Limited shore leave, excessive workloads and stagnant real-wage increases are steadily eroding crew morale. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the report also sheds light on a deepening crisis in recruitment and retention. One respondent warned that young crew see “no advantages remaining [at sea] compared with a shore job”.

INTERESTING TRENDS

Beyond the headline statistics, other interesting trends are emerging. Seafarers in technical, electrical and catering departments are most content, scoring from 8.09 to 8.65/10. Conversely, Captains and Chief Engineers score remarkably low, reflecting the incredible strain that leaders are under right now.

“No advantages remaining compared with a shore job”

You can read the latest Seafarers Happiness Index in full on the website www.seafarershappinessindex.org.



The findings also suggest a mid-career slump, with the happiest seafarers being those at the start or end of their careers. Those in the middle of their careers, aged 35–55, report the lowest morale, squeezed by heavy onboard duties and family responsibilities ashore.

DIRE IMPLICATIONS

Ben Bailey, our Director of Programme, warns the industry about the implications of these findings.

“This quarter’s data should trouble the entire industry. Seafarers are extraordinarily resilient, but we must not mistake resilience for unlimited capacity; endurance is not the same as wellbeing,” he says.

“The fundamentals that crews are asking for are strikingly basic: enough rest to recover, connectivity to sustain family life, quality food, and pay that justifies the sacrifice. The brightest results prove happiness at sea is achievable.”

From Acute Shock to Chronic Strain

In their own words, seafarers responding to the latest Seafarers Happiness Index describe how the sudden shock of the Arabian Gulf crisis has become a long-term strain on their welfare.





Building Trust on the Black Sea

If you passed through the ports of Poti or Batumi in Georgia a year ago, there would have been no sign of The Mission to Seafarers. Today, it's a different story, thanks to the dedication of our chaplain in the country, Sergo Artenyan.

The ports of Poti and Batumi are a vital bridge between Europe and Asia, and at the heart of what is known as the Middle Corridor. The World Bank predicts that trade through the corridor could triple to 11 million tonnes a year by 2030, compared to 2021 levels.

That growth is already evident in Batumi, which handled around 7.3 million tonnes of cargo in 2025 – double what it carried in 2024. Further north, Poti handles around 80% of Georgia's container traffic.



The only thing we are thinking about right now is progress"

The Mission's strategy has always been to take welfare services directly to seafarers who need them, and with Sergo's arrival in July 2025, things have been taking shape.

STARTING AT ZERO

After completing his initial training in London, Sergo returned to Georgia to get started. "We started at zero," he recalls. "There was only me, my backpack and the knowledge I gained during training." But before he could put that training into practice, there was a bigger challenge to overcome, "there was no trust."



We can now go there freely, visit ships, talk with seafarers"

It's taken months of liaising, meeting, background checks and administration to secure access to the ports and ships. "Over here you can't just get a badge and visit a ship. It's an entire process," he explains.

EARNING TRUST, ONE SHIP AT A TIME

Access is only the first step. Authorisation opens doors, but there is no shortcut to building relationships with seafarers. Crews passing through the ports are largely Ukrainian, Russian or Turkish, and Sergo speaks Georgian, Russian and English, with a good knowledge of Armenian. Even so, to many of them, a chaplain offering support with no strings attached seemed too good to be true.

The very concept of welfare support was also alien, with most crews working exclusively in the Black Sea, where there are virtually no other chaplains.

As Sergo explains, most ship visitors are from local authorities, police or immigration, checking protocols. "So they [seafarers] think maybe I am also coming to get them in trouble," he says.

Sergo has worked hard to gain their trust and now visits

between 30 and 50 ships each month, raising awareness of the Mission, driving seafarers into town and listening to their challenges.

"We can now go there freely, visit ships, talk with seafarers," he says with pride. "They're sharing information with each other, saying that there is a Mission to Seafarers chaplain and he's good and supportive."

"This means that tomorrow when they have a challenge, they can say, 'OK, let's go and see Sergo. He probably knows the port authorities, the ITF, all these people.'"

With the foundations firmly in place, Sergo is determined to build a team ready to respond to growth in the region, with more volunteers, better transport and even a seafarers' centre.

"The only thing we are thinking about right now is progress," he smiles.



The World Bank predicts that trade through the Middle Corridor could triple to 11 million tonnes a year by 2030.

Suicide Safer Maritime Communities

Through an ambitious initiative with the Deutsche Seemannsmission (DSM), The Mission to Seafarers is training more seafarers to recognise and respond to those experiencing a crisis at sea.



DSM PORT CHAPLAINS AFTER COMPLETING ASIST TRAINING IN HAMBURG

At the heart of this partnership are two internationally recognised LivingWorks programmes: ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) and safeTALK. Together, they equip welfare professionals, future maritime leaders and local communities with the practical skills needed to prevent suicide and support those in crisis.

The partnership is already taking shape in practice. In September 2026, DSM hosted a LivingWorks ASIST course in Hamburg, Germany, delivered by The Mission to Seafarers. Twenty DSM port chaplains from across the globe completed the programme and became certified Suicide Intervention Care Givers.

“ Training represents an important investment ”

INVESTING IN PEOPLE

The training represents an important investment in those at the frontline of seafarer welfare. Port chaplains regularly encounter seafarers experiencing loneliness, family difficulties, trauma, bereavement and other personal challenges.

The Hamburg programme demonstrates both organisations' commitment to strengthening communities with the skills to recognise when someone may be struggling and take positive action.

Following the course, DSM Psychosocial Support Coordinator Dirk Obermann said: “ASIST is brilliant, both trainers were extremely well prepared, and the course is very well structured and fits in well with our training programme.”

GLOBAL AMBITION

This commitment extends beyond Hamburg. In Panama, The Mission to Seafarers and DSM launched a joint welfare initiative in 2023, known as The

Seafarers Mission Panama. It now provides expanded support to thousands of seafarers passing through the Panama Canal each year.

As part of the wider suicide prevention initiative, Panama-based port chaplains Andrea Meenken and Fr Jesus Iglesia completed our safeTALK Training for Trainers programme. They are now licensed to deliver the maritime edition of safeTALK to maritime universities, cadets, training centres, shipping companies and HR professionals.

As part of their community support, they also plan to provide safeTALK to the Filipino community in Panama, which is a key link to the Filipino seafarers moving through the canal.

The long-term impact could be transformative. By reaching cadets and maritime professionals early in their careers, safeTALK is helping shape a generation of seafarers who can recognise and respond to those in distress, building safer cultures both ashore and on board ships.

Whether through ASIST training in Hamburg, safeTALK delivery in Panama or ongoing pastoral support in ports across the globe, our collaboration with the DSM is strengthening mental health support throughout the maritime sector.

“ The long-term impact could be transformative ”

Suicides in shipping exceeded onboard accident fatalities in 2024, accounting for 9% of all crew deaths – many within the first three months at sea, according to Gard's 2025 Crew Claims Report. This is why safeTALK is so vital.

Different Roles: One Mission

We asked a number of our team to share what they do and how they're contributing to our bigger Mission to provide help and support to the 1.89 million men and women who face danger every day to keep our global economy afloat.



ALETHEA FERNANDES,
ENVIRONMENTAL
SOCIAL
GOVERNANCE
(ESG) DATA
ANALYST

"Working in ESG, I spend my days behind spreadsheets, tracking energy use, emissions, seafarer impact, safety incidents, and more. But every figure has a seafarer behind it. When our Colombo centre's solar panels cut electricity emissions by 95%, the savings went straight back into frontline support.

"Retrofitted centres give seafarers somewhere that feels like home after months at sea, and our hybrid and electric fleet still gets them there, just more sustainably. Seafarers already feel the effects of climate change at sea more than most of us ever will, so shrinking our own footprint is also a way of protecting them, and making sure their rights and wellbeing are never an afterthought, but central to how we work."



MERCEDES VAZQUEZ,
EVENTS
COORDINATOR

"As an Events Coordinator, my role is to bring people

together through events that raise awareness, strengthen relationships across the maritime industry, and generate vital

funding for The Mission to Seafarers. Every sponsorship secured, participant registered, and partnership developed helps ensure the Mission can continue its frontline welfare work.

"While I may not meet seafarers directly in my day-to-day role, it's rewarding to know that the events we deliver help provide practical, emotional, and spiritual support to seafarers and their families around the world."



BEN BAILEY,
DIRECTOR OF
PROGRAMME

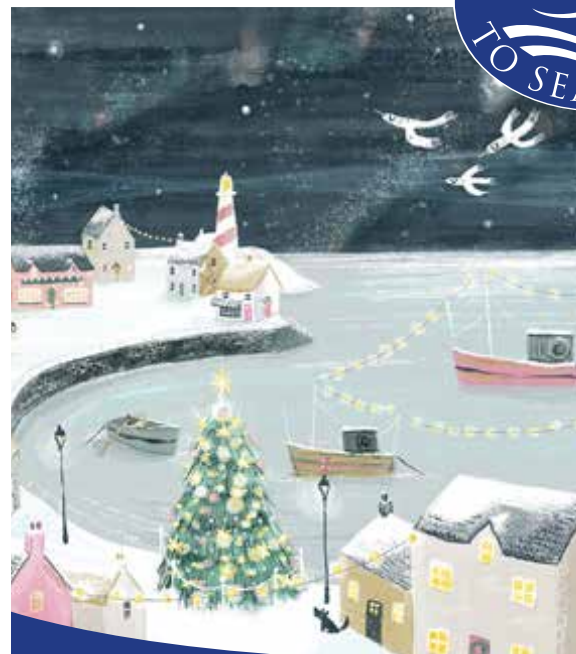
"One of the things I value most about my role at the Mission is the variety of ways

working with colleagues can make a difference. At one end, that can involve supporting seafarers facing abandonment, crisis or other welfare challenges. At the other, it means working with industry leaders, governments and partners to improve the systems that affect millions of seafarers worldwide.

"Whether helping resolve an immediate problem or speaking truth to power on wider issues, the goal is the same: ensuring seafarers and their families are treated with dignity and receive the support they deserve."



My role is to bring people together"



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PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

In 1856, The Mission to Seafarers was founded, and Percy Carpenter painted "Sunrise over Singapore". In the painting, the island appears almost tentative – low, green, humid, half-emerging from sea and sky at the end of the Malay Peninsula. It is a beautiful coincidence that the year of the Mission's own founding should be held in the same light as that scene.

By Secretary General, The Ven. Dr Peter Rouch

Seventy years later, in 1926, the Mission's work began in Singapore. This year, as we mark its centenary, we do so in a city transformed almost beyond recognition. The harbour that once barely troubled the global scales is now one of the great maritime crossroads of the world. The Mission here has changed too. From early chaplaincy and the old Connell House to today's ship visits, port-based centres, transport, anchorage outreach and emergency support, the forms of care have altered because the lives of seafarers have altered.

CENTENARIES INVITE CELEBRATION, BUT THEY ALSO INVITE A MORE SEARCHING QUESTION. WHEN EVERYTHING CHANGES, WHAT REMAINS?

There is an old philosophical puzzle sometimes called the Philosopher's Axe. A well-used axe has its handle replaced, then perhaps replaced again. Later, the head is changed. If every part has been renewed, is it still the same axe?

The answer, if there is one, lies not in the wood or steel but in continuity of inspiration and purpose: what the axe is for and why.

So it is with Singapore. So it is with the Mission. Buildings are sold, centres come and go, ports move faster, technology redraws the human geography of seafaring. Yet beneath these changes moves something more durable: the conviction that seafarers should not be invisible, that those far from home should find welcome, practical help, friendship, prayer, and pastoral care.

Those convictions now rest with Soon Kok, the Singapore team, and the Management Committee. Their inheritance is not nostalgia but living purpose. The danger for any institution is to cherish the shape of its present more than the call of its future. Singapore has not done that. Neither has the wider Mission. That is why this centenary is not simply a look back. It is a sunrise: bright with memory for sure, and brighter still with promise.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO, PLEASE JOIN ME IN THIS PRAYER:

God of all times, all people, all places,
amidst the changes of this world
only you endure,
your love and grace unchanging.
Keep this, your Mission, dedicated to
that love and grace,
expressed in our service to the
seafarers of the world,
that with them we may know the
power of a love that will reach us
and hold us not only for a day,
but through all the seasons of
our lives. Amen.



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