

A Sailor on the Rocks!

Sybre Ogge shares how the Limerick SCFS team were able to minister to a sailor in need.

The *Petra* sailed into Foynes last November where the Limerick SCFS team met the crew. We learnt that the ship's cook, Noel Silva, was very ill and had been evacuated to the UL Limerick Hospital. *Petra*, meaning 'rock', is the name of the ship. Amazingly Noel met with SCFS volunteers as well as Filipino Christians whilst in hospital, and would later put his trust in Jesus, the Rock of our salvation.

As the local SCFS team, we were able to co-ordinate with the ship's agent to find out where he had been admitted and what his immediate needs were, and from there to support him with regular visits, prayer

as well as immediate needs such as clothing.

Noel faced a very difficult five weeks in the hospital, with intense pain keeping him awake at night. The first few nights were spent on a trolley in A&E before he was moved elsewhere and further testing was done and eventually was diagnosed with severe lymphoma. It was decided to administer the first round of



The Limerick "team":
Louis, Gordon & Sybre

Inside...

- News from the Chairman
- "Star Care!"
- Exciting port news from Europe & the Caribbean
- Project Woolly Hat Update
- Starting out in Aberdeen
- A Window into a Hidden World
- Sam Cowan's 25th Anniversary
- Helmsman Snaps, Quotes from the Boats, Life At Sea, and more...

chemotherapy when in Limerick and when he had sufficiently recovered from this he was allowed to travel back to the Philippines.

Though Noel went through a very difficult time in his life, made more so by not having his family with him, it was also a good opportunity for SCFS and other Christians in Limerick to be able to show him Christian love and support. A WhatsApp group was set up to co-ordinate efforts, initially to provide him with basic needs such as a phone-charger, pyjamas, other clothing and toiletries. As the news spread, he was visited by many people both from hospital staff and outside to talk and pray with him. Some of the Filipino staff brought him Filipino food and churches in Limerick regularly prayed for him. It was wonderful to learn that through these conversations Noel had accepted Jesus into his life and put his trust in Him.

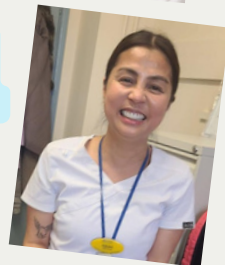
In mid-December Noel was able to travel back to his home city in the Philippines where he was able to spend Christmas with his family and continue with the chemotherapy treatment there. Before leaving Noel said, ***"Thank you to each and everyone for the support, love and prayers extended to me."***

The episode has also helped to strengthen SCFS's relationship with the local shipping agent representing the *Petra*, as we were able to partner with them in supporting Noel during his stay in Limerick.

Latest news is that Noel has completed the third of six rounds of chemo treatment. He expresses his intense gratitude to everyone who supported and prayed for him during his time in Limerick. Please pray that Noel's health will continue to improve and that his faith in the Lord will continue to grow.

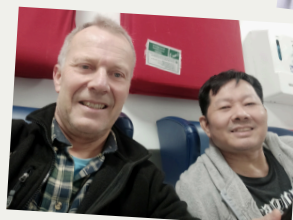


Nathalie Lumanlan, a Filipino nurse always attended Noel, even on her days off from work.



Noel, Gordon & Edwin Cabardo

Aileen Cabardo, a nurse, visited Noel. She gave him a Bible, sent Christian worship songs, and cooked Filipino foods for Noel.



Sybren & Noel

Noel on his way home, Edwin seeing him off.



Arles Maglaque visited & prayed with Noel. He was able to talk to the doctors as well as Noel's family in the Philippines regarding Noel's medical condition.





News from the Chairman

Steven Thompson, Chair of the Board of Trustees

Dear SCFS Supporters,

When reflecting on 2024 I am truly thankful for the blessing of God on SCFS. It continues to show ongoing growth as it has welcomed an additional 36 volunteer ship visitors into the organisation.

We have created an amazing structure and are now benefitting from adding quality people to a strong base.

We have continued to add more knitters' groups and the 2000 hats with SCFS logos is increasing the number of seafarers being aware of SCFS.

The distribution of Christmas gifts just seems to increase every year, and our chaplains are inundated with presents from our faithful supporters to distribute. We believe that this figure was around 4439 across UK, Ireland and Europe.

Over the last 8 months in particular we have seen new volunteers joining at a rapid rate and it is heartwarming to see so many new faces at our weekly prayer meetings and monthly online meetings.

Recently established port ministries in both Malta and Aberdeen are going exceptionally well and we are excited to see the next door that God will open for us.

Last year we welcomed a new trustee to our Board, Hermie Santos. Her compassion to seafarers started when she met and prayed with them during her cruise in 2019 and in December

2023 she joined the SCFS team as a volunteer ship visitor.

We also welcome back Archie McAvoy to the Board of Trustees following a year's break.

I would like to thank Andrew Browne who recently retired after 4 years as a trustee. He has been a wonderful servant and great help to me and the other board members.

SCFS involvement with International Christian Maritime Association has been very fruitful. Myself and Colin Dickinson, our Executive Director, attended the European conference in Geneva last September and had the chance to further engage with like-minded seafarers' charities from around the globe.

We currently have several ship visitor attendees at a seafarers' welfare conference in Manila and HQ is in the process of strengthening our relationship with SCFS Philippines.

We are holding our next conference in Belfast in June this year (13th - 15th). Port Chaplains and volunteer ship visitors representing many of our ports will be attending. I would appreciate your support for this event both prayerfully or financially.

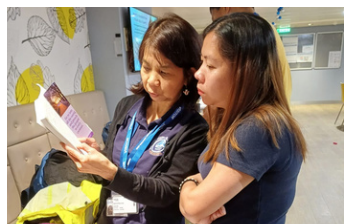
God bless,

Steven

The crew of the *Petra* (Page 1).

Warning on poster:

"Be vigilant when in pirate areas."



Be A Friend To Seafarers

A Thoughtful Gift, A Knitted Scarf, A Kind Donation Or Volunteering To Ship Visit Are Some Of The Ways You Can Help Us Bring Joy To A Seafarer

[Get Involved](#)

Why not check out the SCFS website to learn more?
It's at scfs.org.



Star Care!

Tony Cotton, Portsmouth

All captains have the welfare of their crew as their number one priority but the captain of the *Star Care* goes the extra mile. He is keen to look after not only their physical health but also their wellbeing. In discussion with him on a previous visit we had talked about activities which could bring the crew together as he was concerned they were spending too much of their free time in their cabin. We discussed activities that might attract them to the crew mess and hit upon table football. I took this idea to one of our trustees, Danny Yarker, who agreed to speak to his fellow trustees. On their approval we set about investigating logistics including best value for money and the capacity to stand the rigors of the Bay of Biscay! Having sourced a

suitable table we set about getting it on board. The agent was extremely helpful and organised a delivery point and a plan to get the table up the gangplank and into the mess room. This all went very smoothly, and the table was duly brought on board on the next visit. Here are some photos to give you a flavour of the excitement and teamworking involved.

Our thanks go to SCFS trustees for their support and to **Captain Michael Ocampo** for his vision. We pray that as the crew come together they will remember the God who created and rules the oceans.

*You rule over the surging sea;
when its waves mount up, you still them.
Psalm 89:9*





SCFS Amsterdam

Theo & Yvonne van Zuliekom



One day Yvonne and I visited a ship which is not easy to access. There were crew from Türkiye and the Philippines on it. The Filipino crew were keen to receive all sorts of things: two small crosses, Tagalog Sailor Bibles and calendars and QR-code Key Chain Bibles. Three men walked with me to the car, where Yvonne was waiting for them. A bottle ship, Cebuano Bible, two cuddly toys, knitted hats and scarves, plus three suitcases and a few bags were very gratefully received! Finally, we prayed with them. How delighted and grateful they were, and so were we!

On another visit, I was warmly welcomed by 90 crew members – mainly from England and the Philippines, including two doctors. I was able to give a bottle ship to the Polish captain. Of course, I had to have a bite to eat with the Filipinos, and at the same time was able to share valuable spiritual food.

On board I was called 'Uncle Theo' by the crew. The Chief

Cook said: *"Uncle Theo, if you come again, please let me know in advance, because then I will prepare a special meal".*

At the car we provided suitcases, a winter coat that was immediately put on with gratitude, knitted hats and scarves, socks, a travel bag and some wooden crosses, and cuddly toys. All were gratefully received. We prayed with them before we left.

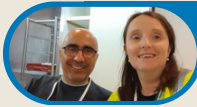
We arranged to visit again and were warmly greeted at the gangway. The Filipino Chief Cook, Elejedo, immediately gave us a fantastic meal (carefully packed) to take home. They listened attentively as Yvonne shared how God had healed and helped her. Sailor Bibles, QR-code Keychain Bibles, a pair of long socks, a cuddly toy, and two suitcases were gratefully received. The word of God never returns empty, and the cook spontaneously started singing a beautiful worship song. We prayed together and departed saying, *"Until we meet again!"*



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GIFT AIDING YOUR DONATIONS TO SCFS

Last year we received £3,700 in Gift Aid – that's money the government added to your gifts! If you are a UK taxpayer please don't forget to complete and sign the enclosed Gift Aid form when donating to SCFS. We can then claim a further 20% from the UK Government towards bringing the Good News with practical, emotional and physical welfare support to seafarers.



SCFS Lisbon

João & Rute Nereu

2024 was a year of great challenges but also of great breakthroughs! We saw doors shutting down on us so many times we could hardly imagine what would unfold.

God had given us tiny steps of hope so we would trust in His mighty power! Sometimes, we say this but when God reveals His will and guides our steps, we stand in awe of God's amazing faithfulness.

God reminded us that He is the One in control! *Balmoral* was a ship which served this purpose. On it we were privileged to meet and establish friendships with a Filipino couple who really touched our hearts. There was also a Christian lady who opened her home onboard so we could feel welcomed. *Balmoral* is in our hearts forever!

God has led us to many other ships such as *Spirit of Adventure*, *Borealis*, *Bolette*, *Ambition*, *Anthem of the Seas*. Onboard we have prayed and shared our testimony many, many times to bring

encouragement for so many who are dealing with life challenges. We also took a memorial service for the loss of a crew member. The year went by faster than we could keep up with, but we saw miracles happening because we decided to trust in the Lord of Lords!

The year ended with another miracle when we were asked to celebrate Christmas onboard *AIDADiva*. On the 23rd December around 10 pm, with a volunteer group from our local church, we celebrated the true meaning of Christmas with those far from home. Hopefully, next year they all celebrate a Christ-centered Christmas with their loved ones.

We praise the Lord for being part of His work in the Harvest!



AIDADiva
Carol Service





SCFS Hamburg

Martin & Monika Otto

The Seafarers of a Filipino Manning Agency are asked to read my book 'How to be a Successful Seafarer?' After reading it, they must share what they learned with the Vice-President who talks with them about the book. A few days ago the VP wrote to me the following:

"Part of their assignment is to read the book and then share with me their take home thoughts. I just interviewed a seafarer who completely read the book and told me what he learned. Every individual has different reflections, but what is common is that they recognized and acknowledged God during their reading."



The books by Martin Otto can be downloaded as PDF files from:
www.resources4seafarers.com/inspirational-books

Editor's note: Martin's recent book, Seafarer's Family: Reality or Illusion? delves into the complex realities faced by seafarers and their families. It explores the intricacies of their lives at sea and on land.

"Rev. Otto provides valuable insights into the challenges, joys, and sacrifices that come with a life intertwined with the ocean. Through compelling storytelling and deep reflection, he invites readers to ponder the blurred lines between reality and illusion in the seafaring world," Glenn Mark Blasquez, vice president for operations and marketing director of Southern Institute of Maritime Studies.



SCFS Hamburg

Volker & Doris Lamaack



Volker's 12 Bible correspondence courses are available from:

www.resources4seafarers.com/biblecourses

I have always believed that only Jesus can save my soul. When I started studying your Bible courses, I learned how I can be saved and how I can accept Jesus as my Saviour. Sometimes we need someone to teach and guide us. I have learnt that it is not enough to do good deeds such as helping the poor, attending church services, reading the Bible, praying and doing good. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the only way and the only bridge to the Father's kingdom. Sometimes I make mistakes, but I confess my guilt immediately and ask for forgiveness. I always want to be close to God. I am no longer afraid to leave this earth because I know that Jesus is with me. He is my salvation. I trust Him. Thank you, dear brother."

Jose is the chief engineer on his ship. He comes from the Philippines and has a traditional Christian background. He is now studying his ninth Bible correspondence course.



SCFS Malta

Brent & Renea Liebe

Our team here in Malta has officially begun to visit ships on our own! It has been a slow process getting started, but we have begun! We have found that there are two ports in which we can visit cargo ships, and an additional port to visit cruise ships. With so many ships coming through Malta we will not have a problem finding one to visit!

On the first ship we visited this year we found out it comes to Malta every few months. There were not any Christians on this

particular ship yet but we were able to pray with a few of the men. The crew has already invited us to come back when they return.

We are just so excited to see what God has in store for the ports here in Malta, and the relationships we are going to begin to build. Praying that God will lead us to just the right vessels, and that He will write our story as we begin our journey with the seafarers' over here!



Quotes from the Boats!

What seafarers say about SCFS...

"My friend we're coming back to Ireland. I look forward to seeing you... Please bring me 5 bananas and 5 pears. Also, longgines (Long-Johns), and paper coveralls" (envelopes).



Seafarer "Devs" says, "Thank you pastor for the knowledge you've shared with me, and for the songs that we sing, thank you for coming to our ship, hoping next time we'll see each other again doing some singing, worshipping and praising God. God Bless You all the way and your family."

"We are spoilt for choice!" said a Syrian captain entering a supermarket.

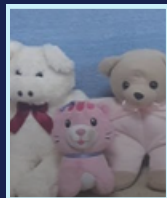
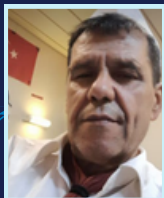


"In Syria there are very few shops and little choice."

"It means a lot to us that you visit us and help us go ashore! Thank you my friend. I won't forget you! Because of you we could get rid of some of the stress from our hard sailor's life."



"Thank you for taking us shopping, now we have fresh food!"



Muammer, a Turkish cook received a Turkish Bible along with teddies for his granddaughter: "You are my most valuable friend. I will never forget you. I love you."

His granddaughter is excited to get the teddies once her grandfather goes home again.

Project "Woolly Hat" Update!



A group in Irvinestown really embraced the "Woolly Hat" project! Not only did they make two requests for logo badges, but they contacted HQ a third time. Undeterred on hearing that we had depleted our supplies, they went ahead and purchased their own batch of logo badges! This was such an encouragement to SCFS. Thanks also to a couple of individual supporters who have specifically made donations towards purchasing more badges.

We hope to continue **Project Woolly Hat** later this year!



*Thank
you!*
to all the
SCFS Knitters

We continue to be amazed by our faithful knitters who spend many hours creating beautiful hats, snoods and scarves among other items for the seafarers.



Sam enjoyed a morning with the knitting group at Ballywatt Presbyterian where he was presented with 124 knitted hats

and a number of gift packs. Over Christmas the hats were on display in the church. He was also delighted to receive hats from ladies at **Ards First Presbyterian**.

While on deputation, Colin and Jae collected hundreds of hats as they visited groups and individual knitters. One knitting group knitted us one thousand woolly hats!! **Thanks Doreen and friends! Jean McDermott**, from Dublin, nimbly knit around five hundred hats!

In Aberdeen, Iain visited a ship tied up in dock due to an emergency. The twenty crew members on board were delighted to be given hand made 'bonnets!'

Bethseda Free Church and the Bethan-On-Sea ladies, keep the Portsmouth team supplied with hats. These are very popular with the seafarers on the cruise ships.





SCFS St Lucia

John Honore

SCFS ministry in St. Lucia has been very encouraging over the last few months. Our efforts continue to bring seafarers face to face with the everlasting Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The ministry here now has two active members. John Honore, who has given time and effort to the cause over the years has welcomed a new team member, Floyd Hilliman, who pastors a church on the west coast of the island. Together the team has been ministering particularly to the spiritual needs of crew members and occasionally to guests of cruise liners when given the opportunity to do so. Great interest is shown in the literature that is made available by us, prompting some



discussions about the message of their content. Many people express words of appreciation for the ministry.

It is always a blessing to meet other brothers and sisters in the Lord during our visits to the ships and a pleasure to be able to encourage them in the faith.



We look forward to continuing the effort for the rest of the cruise season here in St. Lucia.

Please continue to pray for us and those that we interact with on the ships that God's name would be glorified in all of our lives.



THE GIFT OF LEGACY

We are very grateful to those who entrust SCFS with a legacy – each one helps us to continue this vital ministry.

Would you prayerfully consider including us in your will?

Here is a form of words you could use...

- "I bequeath xxxxx to the Seafarers' Christian Friend Society, CH18, Colvin House, Inspire Business Park, 16 Carrowreagh Road, Dundonald, BT16 1QT, Northern Ireland. Registered Charity Number 209133".

To discuss further, call Claire Kyle between 10am and 5pm, Monday and Wednesday, on +44 (0) 2895 217 770.

If you decide to take this step, please let us know by writing to Claire at our headquarters address or emailing her at hq@scfs.org with the details.

There are three types of legacy:

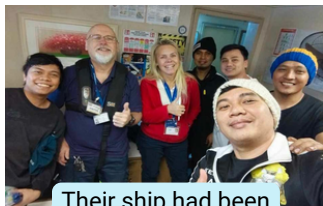
1. A **Residuary Legacy** is the giving of the remainder of your estate, or a percentage of the remainder of your estate, as a gift.
2. A **Specific Legacy** is the giving of a specific item that you have left in your Will, for example, an item of property or possessions, shares, bonds or a life insurance policy.
3. A **Pecuniary Legacy** is a specific sum of money left in your Will.





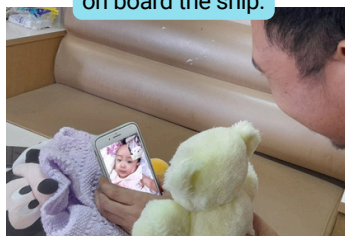
LIFE AT SEA

...ISN'T ALWAYS A CRUISE



Their ship had been detained/arrested due to a lack of food and salary! Gordon and an ITF* representative visited them in Foynes, Limerick. (*International Transport Workers' Federation).

This cadet told me he has a 6-month-old daughter who was born when he was on board the ship.



I don't know how to thank you for all the good things you have done and for helping us. from the bottom of my.. thank you for thousands. 🙏🙏🙏❤️

God bless and more power.

I hope the Lord will give you a healthy body so that many people like us who are victims can be helped.

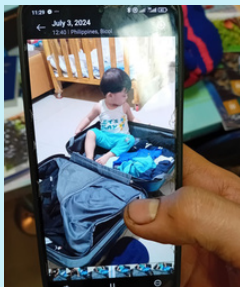


Above: A message from a former crew member of the seized MV *Matthew*. He has been released, but eight are still in prison.



Above: Fire onboard ship in Cork port due to a fault with a piece of cargo handling equipment – you can see the burnt machinery after it was removed from the hold. Three fire engines at the scene.

Helmsman SNAPS 📍 Helmsman SNAPS 📍 Helmsman SNAPS 📍 Helmsman SNAPS 📍 Helmsman SNAPS 📍 Helmsman SNAPS 📍



1: Seafarer has his left eye hurt as a tiny piece of metal sprang into his eye; 2: A Filipino seafarer showed me a video of his 18-month-old son climbing into his suitcase before he left home to join the ship! His son said, "Daddy take me with you!" Leaving him behind for 9 months is heartbreaking! 3: Staying warm on deck in a tent with a heating lamp! 4: These Nigerians in Cork said, "It is very cold here," Charles replied, "No, it will soon be colder!"



SCFS Aberdeen, Scotland

Iain Sanders

🗣️ *Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know. Jeremiah 33:3*

Iain writes about his early days as Port Chaplain in Aberdeen...

When I arrived in Aberdeen the vendors of the house had not moved out, and we did not have access until late afternoon. I sat down that evening with a cup of tea and wondered where all the boxes were going to go and how we were going to unpack and store our belongings.

Three weeks later I was in the office of the port SHEQ officer being ushered through my port induction. I was introduced to the harbour master and one of the dock control officers and shown how to use the port website for information. I was driven around the port, introduced to some pilots, the linesmen, and some of the security personnel, often from the depths of the car. I could hear their voice but see no face. At the end of the day, I was wondering where do I go from here? It was as if an audible voice was saying "Leave it to me, I am in charge".

Driving into the north port the following week, happy to finally be on the road to ship visitation, I could see enormous vessels that engendered a sense of trepidation – supply vessels and standby vessels are big! But all the worry vanished as the car was parked on Regent Quay and I approached the first

vessel. An invitation to come on board was issued from the top of the gangplank. Upon reaching the top of the gangplank the ship's visitor book appeared and I was signed in and I was taken up several flights of steps to see the Captain who engaged me in a general conversation.

On the next vessel, the Captain was from Ukraine and the first officer was from Romania. They were happy that I had visited and first added to my limited Romanian vocabulary in return for teaching them an English phrase. As I descended the gangplank, I met a Filipino AB disposing of some rubbish – he was delighted to hear some words in Tagalog, "*magandang umaga, kamustaka*". He engaged in conversation and accepted a Gospel of John. Imagine my surprise when he told me his name was Jesus.

When I visited the south port for the first time, there was a Maersk vessel in for a name change. Maersk have sold their vessels to Duff and all the vessels are now named Skandi...

This time the number of steps to the bridge was far greater and I had to catch my breath upon arriving at the bridge. The Captain was from the Faroe Islands. We had a brief general conversation, but he was delighted to accept the offer of twenty-five new woolly hats for his crew. I visited this vessel a few weeks later with a new Captain and upon the offer of Christmas gifts his words were, "We



would be delighted to accept because it shows that someone cares."

Since that first day prayers have been answered. I have met crews and their back-to-back replacement crews. I have ministered in mess rooms, engine rooms, crew sheds down on deck, smoke rooms and on the bridge. Seafarers are from the four corners of the globe and vessels are large and small. Supply vessels and standby vessels make up the greater number of ships in port but there are many other types of vessels: container ships, diving support vessels, huge vessels with helipads, coasters, fisheries inspection vessels, a ferry, bulk carriers.

The weather has been varied. We were not here that long before there was an extended period of snow and ice. But in all things God is to be praised, often at the end of the day I would wonder what next and something would happen to demonstrate that the work in Aberdeen is not my work, but God's work. One morning an email winged its way to my phone, an invite to a monthly pastor's prayer time. These prayer times are like an oasis amid a busy chaplaincy. One day I returned to my car to write up my log and the phone pinged with an email. The message was from a lady who said the CEO of Aberdeen port has instructed me to set up a meeting, he would like to meet you.

On several occasions seafarers after hearing the Bible read to them have said, "Thank you for reading God's word to us" or "It is good to hear God's word read". Only

last week a seafarer listened as Psalm 119:41-56 was read. The result? A discussion about personal Bible reading and prayer and a question: "When we arrive back in port will you take me to church?"

There are many other things I could share, one chef likes to challenge me to taste test sweets! In one of the mess rooms, four Filipinos listened attentively as I shared from Psalm 107 and Matthew 8:23-27. I heard several *Amens* and a *Hallelujah*. They invited me to share food with them. Then the Filipino galley steward appeared and engaged me in conversation. She was enthralled that as a missionary/chaplain I visit ships and engage seafarers on board vessels. She thanked me for coming and wants me to return.

Two upcoming events I would appreciate prayer for are an invitation to participate in the commissioning and dedication of a memorial stone to the trawlermen of Aberdeen on the 29th of March, something Sam Cowan has graciously given some pointers on. In May, the tall ships arrive in Aberdeen and the chaplaincies in Aberdeen have been asked to set up a stall sharing about the work of the chaplains.

We are excited by the developing work of SCFS in Scotland and are keen to expand our Scottish support network. Iain and Mike would love to share about SCFS with your churches and schools.

To hear fresh updates and about the ways in which you can support SCFS Scotland, contact:

- iain.sanders@scfs.org
- mike.burleigh@scfs.org





SCFS Dublin, Ireland

Jaeguen Bae

I would like to sincerely thank everyone who supports us in many ways with love and compassion, which helps us in the ministry among seafarers. Around Christmas and New Year I led seventeen carol services on different ships in Dublin and Greenore ports as I gave out Christmas presents to seafarers with the volunteers Tristan, Joe and John. These visitors were a great encouragement to the seafarers and me. On a bulk ship with twenty-four Angolan, Bulgarian and Burmese crew, I was amazed to see the Buddhist Burmese crew willingly join a carol service. They were so happy to sing carols, hear God's Word and the Gospel and pray with me. They were challenged to know Jesus as the Only God and Saviour and six Bibles were taken.

I also want to thank those who donated Bibles. I was so encouraged to see more than five hundred Bibles taken last year as I believe that the Bible is the greatest Missionary.

On a general cargo ship I had an opportunity to lead

seafarers in the study of God's Word. The Romanian captain, Dutch, Russian and Filipino crew thanked me for encouraging them with God's Word and prayers. Nine Bibles were taken. Please pray God's Word will be real to them when they read it.

On a container ship I met three Filipino crew and shared God's word. The cook was especially moved. She confided in me that her husband died fourteen years ago, and she has been working hard to support her family of five children. She asked me to pray for her twenty-year-old son who is looking for a job on board the ship where she is working and for her eighteen-year-old daughter who will have exams in February for college entrance. She has a lot of burdens to support her children financially as they study at school. She was encouraged as we prayed together for her family situations.

Happy crew with the wonderful hats!
They send you a big thank you for them as they feel cared for by you!



Let me in!

When I led a Bible study on *Aurora*, a container ship, I heard someone knocking on the window behind me. The seafarer outside asked me to pray for his family whom he has been praying for God's salvation. He asked me, "Can I join the Bible study?" As he was on duty, he couldn't come in and wanted to take the Bread of Life and have fellowship.



A Window into a Hidden World

Richard Shurmer, Ship Visitor, Portsmouth



Richard, a retired secondary school Religious Education teacher and a Church of England minister, has served as a Reader (Licensed Lay Minister) for thirty seven years, and more recently as an ordained priest.

As part of my second year of curacy, I needed a one-month placement in another church or chaplaincy. Just before Christmas 2024, I contacted Peter Wells, SCFS Port Chaplain, to explore the possibility of joining the Portsmouth Team. Peter, unfamiliar with this type of request, kindly investigated, and soon we met in person with Ship Visitor, Hermie Santos. We shared our testimonies and discussed the spiritual and practical aspects of ship visiting. Before long, I received application forms, with the wonderfully inventive title 'Ad Hoc Volunteer' – or as I like to think of it, 'Needed Volunteer.'

SCFS provides excellent online training, with accessible text and video content designed for those unfamiliar with the life of seafarers. I took extra time to make notes and reflect, but nothing compares to first-hand experience. This 'Needed Volunteer' quickly realized how much I depended on the wisdom and guidance of Peter and the Portsmouth team. Their faith, encouragement, and generosity are truly inspiring.

The training highlighted how seafarers often face loneliness and isolation, spending months at sea with limited communication and shore leave. But it wasn't until my first ship visit that this became a reality. As Peter and I entered the mess, twelve smiling crew members greeted us, eager for conversation. We shared the good news of Jesus, offering seafarers

Bibles, books, and woolly hats. Soon, a barge arrived from the Isle of Wight, and the men rushed off to bring aboard a wind turbine blade. The ship's master returned later to apologize and express his gratitude:

"We are pretty isolated, and it's good to know people care about us sea people. We can feel forgotten."

God's guiding hand has been evident throughout my placement. Aboard the MS *Borealis*, Brian, Angela, and I experienced a series of divine appointments. We were directed to connect with a seafarer who SCFS can support in his ministry, providing Christian fellowship among the crew. Later, in the freezing February air, we met JR, mopping the deck. He was delighted to receive a warm knitted hat and spoke about his family in the Philippines. When asked if he was a Christian, he responded, "Yes, born again." He explained that while the chaplain led Sunday worship, there was no regular fellowship. We prayed for JR and his family, also asking God to provide other believers with whom he could meet. Soon after we met Joshua who is also born again. We encouraged him, saying, "Do you know JR? He's looking for someone to pray with!" What a joy to see God at work.

I wholeheartedly recommend placements with SCFS as *it truly opens a window into a hidden world*. My prayers for seafarers will now be deeply personal. A huge thank you to Peter, Tony, Brian, Angela, Hermie, and Sharon for making me feel so welcome.

To those considering this ministry – step aboard. You'll be blessed beyond measure!





Sam Cowan's 25th Anniversary

It's always nice to celebrate significant staff anniversaries, and on the 6th of November SCFS family and friends gathered together to mark Sam Cowan's 25 years with SCFS. Our thanks go to Joanne Bunting, MLA, who hosted the event in Stormont Parliament buildings in Belfast.

Steven Thompson, SCFS Chairman, was on hand to thank Sam for his years with SCFS, noting that for Sam it was more than just a job as he has a heart for the seafarers and is always available to them.

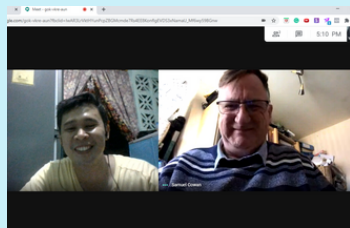
He noted that a special debt was owed to Sam as, when SCFS had been going through difficulties some time ago, Sam had brought it to his church. Their timely intervention was instrumental in securing the future of SCFS.

Archie McAvoy represented Sam's home church, Hamilton Road Baptist, sharing how Sam had brought the church onboard with supporting SCFS. He commented that "Sam's Wrap", organised by Sam and his wife Pauline, and run on a Friday evening and Saturday morning at the start of December, had been a highlight for the church for many years. This was a family event with teens and adults making up Christmas gift boxes, while the children made Christmas cards and then eagerly

carried the boxes out to the vans. In recent years the families make up gift bags and drop them into the church. Sam and Pauline

distribute the gifts to the seafarers on the run up to Christmas, and you will also find them visiting ships on Christmas and Boxing Day. Archie talked about the joy it has been to have seafarers visit the church, which has also been able to host some seafarers' baptisms. During COVID Sam found new ways to engage again with seafarers whether through Zoom or by providing daily devotions over YouTube or by engaging in the open air on decks and the quayside. Through the years Sam has also been instrumental in recruiting volunteers from the church to assist in ship visiting, and this summer some folks helped to man the Cruise Ship Hub for the seafarers.

Retired Belfast Harbour Master, **Paul Hayes**, paid tribute to how Sam comes alongside the harbour staff, and how he



was always quick to raise the needs of the seafarers.

Paul reminisced about Sam's involvement in donating bicycles to assist seafarers travel into Belfast and to local shops. Bicycles were given to vessels which kept them on board and could therefore use them in many ports around the United Kingdom and northern Europe.

He shared about a number of years ago when Sam organised for a group of primary school children to come to Belfast Harbour and sing carols on the quays adjacent to the vessels. This was really appreciated by the homesick vessel crews and was a great way to introduce children to the work of seafarers.

He explained that behind the scenes Sam was often in communication with shipping lines and ship's captains to obtain permissions for visits.

He noted that during the COVID pandemic many seafarers were trapped, with no way of getting vaccines and unable to travel home without them. Sam was able to identify medical personnel and a chemist in North Belfast willing to help, and even transported seafarers to receive the crucial jabs.

Andrew Frizelle, of Frizelle Shipping Services Ltd, shared a message. Extracts:

"A friendly smile and a chat, a visit to town and an internet call home can make a long contract

a bit more bearable. Arriving as strangers, leaving as friends."

"The importance of a ship's visitor is a vital part of port welfare. The personal contact and the chance to offload your concerns to a listening Port Chaplain. The value of just being there and willing to chat and listen, to some crew members can be a life saver. This is the roll filled by Sam Cowan".

"Dull is not a word associated with Sam. He has a broad smile and a cheery attitude to the job. When Sam laughs (which is often) you laugh with him. He climbs the gangway and the crew are waving him to come on board."

Other surprises for the gathered friends, family, supporters and other Port Chaplains and ship visitors included:

- A video greeting from the CEO of the MNWB, who awarded Sam the Lifetime Award earlier this year.
- A video greeting from the Christian Fellowship onboard the *Spirit of Discovery*.
- Lorraine Foreman shared about her recent cruise ship visiting with Sam.
- Messages from seafarers who Sam has had contact with over the years.

The evening was made complete with a special presentation to Sam, followed by Sam and Pauline cutting the Anniversary cake!





SCFS Montrose, Scotland

Mike Burleigh

"Showers of Blessing"

2024 was the year when SCFS came to support the Montrose Port Mission! The Montrose Port Authority even contributed funding for the new sign and painting of the Seafarer's Cabin. Lydia and I, along with many others, prayed for volunteer support for the Montrose Port Mission. God answered generously with many responding and offering to help. These included small groups such as the Ferryden Craft and Café people who funded the Mission Christmas presents for ship crews.

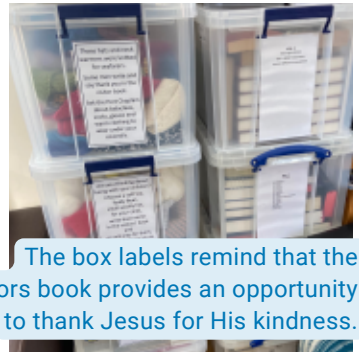
Given that crew usually only have off duty time in the evenings, we try to ensure they understand that they can use the Seafarers Cabin anytime, without supervision. They are encouraged to make themselves at home, staying out of the weather while enjoying the free Wi-Fi (to phone home), cozy sofas, and a selection of biscuits, chocolates, coffee, and other hot and soft drinks.

Appreciation of our trust is evidenced in the modest use of the free resources and the appreciative entries in the visitors book. (You can read extracts at scfs.org/Montrose.)

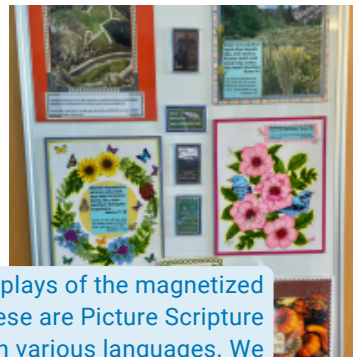
We try to provide resources meaningful to tired seafarers' ranging from a guitar with praise and worship song books to radio and CD/DVD players, displays of home languages books, boxes inviting individuals to help themselves to woollen hats, neck warmers and balaclavas, warm clothing to wear under their coveralls, toiletries and suggested presents for the family, soft toys, ladies toiletries and hand bags and children's story book Bibles.



Michael, Elie and I are pictured here outside the cabin on our new picnic bench.



The box labels remind that the visitors book provides an opportunity to thank Jesus for His kindness.



Dorothy (from Cyprus) funded displays of the magnetized 'Messroom Messages'. These are Picture Scripture Verses and Fridge Magnets in various languages. We encourage crew to select verses for their cabins.

Thank you!



Dorothy (Glasgow) generously funded a print run of 'He Lived Among Us'.

The Filipino crews enjoy this 'Picture Bible for all ages' which we hope and pray will prompt them to take the next step of serious Bible study with Emmaus College.



1: Loyota woke his wife (it was 11pm in the Philippines) to take her on some "remote shopping" for a handbag after Mike reminded him that ladies often prefer to make their own choices! 2: Loyota chose a story book Bible for his 7 year-old-son. 3: Everyone loves the Scripture verses. 4: In the cabin, kitting out some guys for winter.



SCFS Portsmouth, UK

Peter Wells

He caused the storm to be still, so that the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad because they were quiet, so He guided them to their desired haven.
Psalms 107:29-30

Visit to *Baltic Moon*

What an encouraging visit to a small coaster in Cowes, Isle of Wight! They had been through very rough seas from Belfast (twenty-one-meter waves) so we spent some time thanking God for their safe arrival and then praying for them all and their families.

I spoke to the whole crew of seven and gave the children's picture Bible to the lady C/O and encouraged her to read it to the whole crew. When she thought time might be a

problem, I told them all what the captain of *Eastern Vanquish* had done in making Bible reading part of the safety drill!

I did the 'evangecube' (Gospel message in a cube!) with three crew initially (including chief) then was asked to repeat it for another crew member. When the whole team gathered in the mess room they asked me to do it again for the Captain! It was a blessed time and I took two of them into town (Cowes) for a look around.

The ship then took the Isle of Wight wheat to Ringaskiddy, Southern Ireland where our Port Chaplain, Charles, was able to visit and keep up the encouraging work. Praise The Lord!



Evangecube





SCFS Cork, Ireland

Colin Jenkins

Dear friends, we rejoice at how the Lord has been growing the SCFS ministry in Cork and other ports in Ireland. We have great favour from the port of Cork, and also shipping agents, dockers, etc. We are looking forward to the upcoming cruise season (April-October) and value your prayers as over one hundred ships usually berth. Eighty six are currently listed on the Port's website. Our team of volunteers look forward to welcoming them into our 'crew lounge/meeting area' on the Cobh train station platform. We are greatly indebted to the Port of Cork for providing us with this wonderful facility as well as free Wi-Fi for the crew.

Thanks for your ongoing prayerful and practical support as we climb the gangways bringing the Good News of Jesus to people from all over the world. Ship ministry as

someone has said is *"the fastest way to the ends of the earth!"*

On a very rainy day I visited this container ship. Emmanuel, who is a born-again Tamil believer from Tamil Nadu said it's difficult on board being the only true believer. He told me his family were all Hindu until his mum got saved, and now they are all born-again. He exclaimed:

"We did everything for our gods and they did nothing for us! We did nothing for Jesus, but He did EVERYTHING for us!"



Helmsman SNAPS Helmsman SNAPS Helmsman SNAPS Helmsman SNAPS Helmsman SNAPS Helmsman SNAPS



1. The Captain and Chief told me they have never experienced such lovely Christmas presents on board, and want to say thank you to our generous supporters!
2. Twenty one days smooth crossing from Argentina until reaching Ireland!! Happy crew delighted to have a visitor and Bibles.



Scan me with
your phone.



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