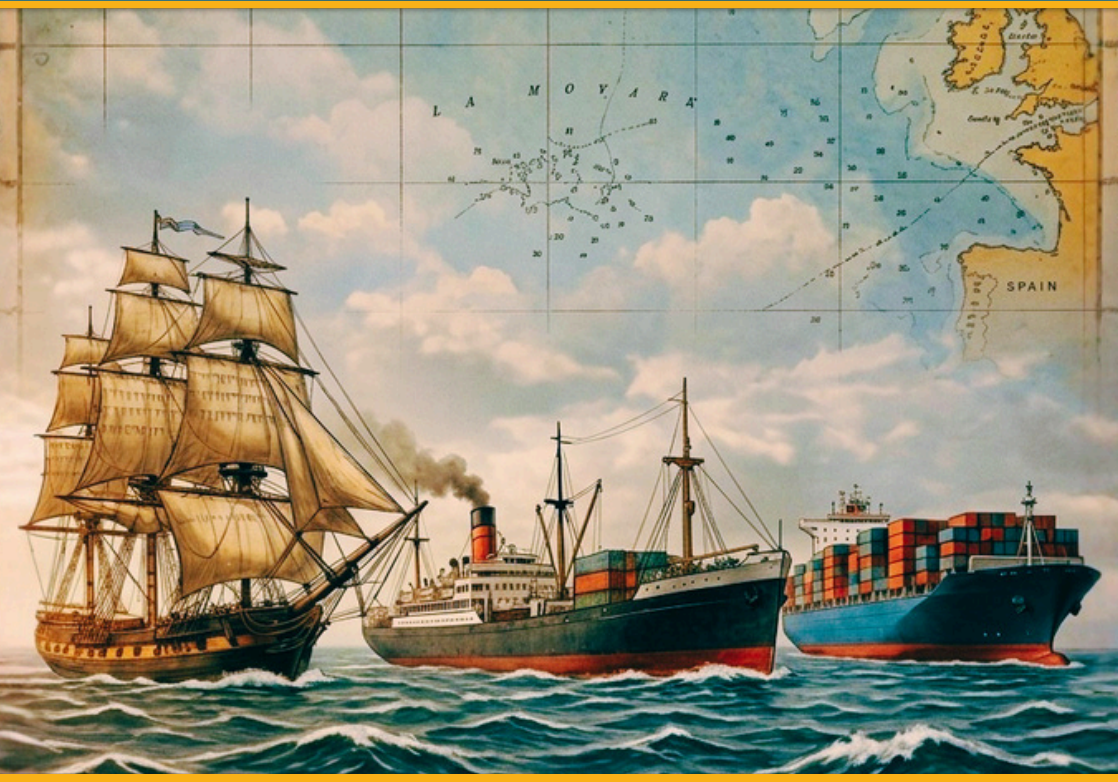
SCFS

Seafarers' Christian Friend Society

# Helmsman

Serving Seafarers with Compassion since 1846

## 180TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE EDITION




# 180 Years!

## 1846 - 2026

Celebrating a history of
Serving Seafarers with Compassion

Summer 2026 Edition



# Welcome!

Steven Thompson, Chair of the Board of Trustees

What a start we have had to 2026!

The continued growth of SCFS never ceases to amaze me. We are seeing growth right across the organisation, especially in the numbers of volunteers, and I am so grateful for those who came before me and helped and nurtured me through my years as a trustee and now as Chairman.

We have built and grown a team of very capable and enthusiastic people and that makes my job very easy.

> "For no-one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ."
> 1 Corinthians 3:11

The work of SCFS is becoming more and more difficult in the modern secular-driven world - and in the Seafaring world perhaps even more so - BUT we will never compromise being a Seafarer's Christian Friend. I speak to many people about our calling, our mission field and our vision and they are always very surprised at what we do, but perhaps more so why we do it.

SCFS always has been and always will be Christ-centered and our recent success is down to this. All that we do and achieve is for His Glory - a vision that is not only shared but lived out by our trustees, port chaplains, staff and volunteers.

I have little doubt that God will continue to bless us, not least because we consistently thank Him for what He has done and ask Him to use us to do more. We continue to make a massive difference in the lives of seafarers just by being their Christian Friend.

Please continue to support us in prayer, giving, knitting and volunteering.

*Steven*

P.S. *As we celebrate 180 years with this commemorative edition of the Helmsman, the format is a little different from usual. An insight into our history forms the centerfold and we have included some highlights from previous issues. We have also invited some friends from the business world to celebrate with us by contributing to our work in exchange for a promotional spot.*











# Celebrating 180 Years!

It should be highlighted that we have a wonderful caring organisation here in Cork. The Seafarers' Christian Friend Society is run by living day saints. They provide care for seafarers arriving in Cork. They are a friendly face in a difficult environment. Their contribution to seafarers' wellbeing sometimes might be as simple as providing SIM cards so that crews can contact home. On land and at sea, simple little things can mean a lot. That's for sure!

***Steve**, Cobh Marine Pilot*

SCFS has always been quick to recognise and respond to the needs of seafarers.

Donated bicycles helped crews reach local shops, while the simple act of arranging schoolchildren to sing carols on the quayside brought comfort to homesick crews and introduced children to the vital work of seafarers.

Much work happens quietly behind the scenes, working with shipping companies and captains to ensure crews receive the support they need.

During the COVID pandemic, when many seafarers were stranded without access to essential vaccinations, Sam identified willing medical personnel and personally transported crews to receive the vital jabs needed to travel home.

***Paul Hayes***
*Former Belfast Harbour Master*

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.

***Andrew Frizelle***
*Frizelle Shipping Services Ltd*

My daughter's husband served at sea in the merchant navy and currently works offshore. They know well the challenges that separation brings, such as missing out on special family occasions like birthdays and Christmas.

My son-in-law spoke highly of SCFS, describing how he and his colleagues deeply appreciated those from SCFS who were there to provide guidance, advice, and support.

***Lorraine Foreman***
*Belfast Volunteer Ship Visitor*

Thank you!! We received such positive feedback and I heard that most of your books are in the hands of our wonderful crew. I look forward to seeing you next time we are in Hamburg.

*Human Resource Manager*










# From the Director's Chair



Colin Dickenson

Exactly four years ago I was earnestly praying for God to show me His will concerning future employment. Within a month I was attending a breakfast fellowship and engaged in a conversation which then connected me to SCFS and my appointment as Executive Director. Such a clear answer to prayer.

I count it a blessing, honour and privilege to be a custodian of SCFS at this appointed time in God's plan and purposes. It is also an honour to serve under a Board of Trustees and alongside staff and volunteers who are passionate, committed, supportive, caring, and grace-gifted in their roles.

Over the past three and a half years SCFS has rebranded, reviewed and strengthened its governance and operations, and expanded its port ministry to include Shetland, Aberdeen, Montrose, Limerick and now Ketchikan Alaska. The amazing thing is that we hadn't planned to serve in these ports. Each one was a God-orchestrated door opening, along with God-chosen port chaplains and volunteers. Since January 2024 SCFS has been blessed by the recruitment of 60 Volunteer Ship Visitors.

In conclusion, I want to say thank you to each of our supporters for your continuing faithfulness in prayer, financial giving and knitting. God bless you all.

# Introducing SCFS Ketchikan, Alaska

We serve a God who so many times surprises us as he unfolds His plans and purposes and none more so for an SCFS presence in Alaska. This time last year we learned that our St Lucia Port Chaplain, John Honore, was travelling to Ketchikan Alaska at the request of a friend. The port can often have 2 or 3 cruise ship visits per day and during his summer stay John visited many, accompanied by a few local church members. One of the volunteers, Dawn Hill, became passionate that the ministry to visiting ships should continue and got in touch with our Executive Director to be recruited as a SCFS volunteer. Dawn also connected him to Clover Pass Community Church where the volunteers attended. From there strong links were forged and discussions ensued, resulted in a Memorandum of Understanding and the church becoming an affiliate of SCFS. The exciting news is that six volunteer ship visitors have since been recruited through SCFS HQ and online induction training provided during May, facilitated by two very experienced ship visitors. John returned to Ketchikan at the start of this May to cruise ship visit over the summer and is mentoring the SCFS volunteers accompanying him. Please pray for SCFS Ketchikan, the blessed relationship we have with the church and volunteers, for Pastor Jake and Abby who are helping to coordinate things locally, and for the ongoing establishment of the ministry.



Abby & John





# 2025 Impact Report

## UK & Ireland

It's not about numbers, but numbers do tell a story. They shed light on the **impact** our supporters and workers (voluntary and paid) are having on the lives of tens of thousands of seafarers. We don't think they tell the full story, but you'll get the picture!

Thank you for your part in our story!

### Our Vision

To create an environment where seafarers, their families, and many others may freely have the opportunity to hear the word of God.

### Our Mission

To actively encourage and minister in every possible way to the spitirtual, physical, practical and mental welfare of seafarers, their families and port workers and to provide counsel in the cause of Christian faith and well-being.

### Our Maritime Ministry

- Friendship
- Onboard worship services
- Onboard & online Bible studies
- Christian literature & Bibles in many languages
- In-person prayer
- Gifts such as toiletries, knitted hats
- Lifts to shops
- Trips to church services

*Available in some ports:*

- Seafarer Lounge or Cabin
- Sim Cards
- Sight seeing trips

**1,783**
**Ships Visited**
1,599 merchant vessels
184 cruise ships

**23,109**
**Seafarers Helped**
13,370 in the UK
9,739 in Ireland

**4,035**
**Care Packages**
Toiletries, etc.

**9,817**
**Knitted Gifts**
Like wooly hats

**706**
**Welcomes**
Seafarers welcomed to a dedicated lounge or cabin

**59**
**Volunteers**
7 Chaplains
52 Ship Visitors

**472**
**Lifts**
To shops, churches, local attractions

**12**
**Hospital Visits**
Supporting seafarers in need

**1,434**
**Workers Encouraged**
Friendship & care extended to port staff, stevedores, harbour police, welcome & security personnel

# MNWB Volunteer of the Year Award

Congratulations to **Peter Wells**, one of our volunteer Port Chaplains!

Peter received the Volunteer of the Year Award from the Merchant Navy Welfare Board at its Annual Awards ceremony. This prestigious honour recognises his unwavering commitment to befriending and supporting seafarers throughout 14 years of volunteering with SCFS.

**Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal, Patron of the MNWB**, attended the ceremony and personally presented the awards. Her presence highlighted the importance of the achievements recognised on the day and emphasised the crucial role of welfare support within the maritime community.

Honouring six recipients for their contributions to maritime welfare, these awards covered five key areas: innovation, collaboration, lifelong service, frontline delivery, and volunteering. The ceremony highlighted the diverse roles and unwavering dedication found throughout the maritime welfare community.

Peter was nominated for his faithful ship-visiting, mainly in Portsmouth Port. Over the past year he has also been serving seafarers in Cowes, Isle of Wight. He is a constant figure in the port, carrying out many ships visits each week. Peter has a heart for the seafarers, seeking to meet their many needs. From providing much-valued SIM cards, woolly hats, literature and friendship, he is always ready to listen and advise. Peter maintains contact with many seafarers while they are at sea. His commitment was particularly evident during the Covid-19 pandemic, when he was the only person permitted to continue onboard ship visits.

Peter continues to mentor teams in Portsmouth, Lisbon, Malta and now Alaska.

Stuart Rivers, Chief Executive of the MNWB which is the umbrella charity for the UK Merchant Navy and fishing fleets that represents 47 member charities, remarked:

*"The people we are honouring are the driving force behind real, lasting change in seafarers' welfare. Their work touches thousands of lives, offering support, dignity and hope to those who spend months away from home keeping global trade moving."*

*"Their dedication is not only heart-warming – it is transformative. These individuals and organisations embody the highest standards of service and leadership, and their collective impact on the maritime community is immense. They are all thoroughly deserving of this recognition, and we are proud to celebrate their achievements."*

Peter later shared, *"I am extremely grateful for this award; not that I deserve it, but it recognises the amazing SCFS Solent team of eight volunteers of which I am a part. There is also a whole army of ladies who knit hats, gloves, slippers and neck warmers which are greatly appreciated on board. To adequately care for the physical, mental and spiritual needs of the seafarers takes time, patience and opportunity and I pray that God will continue to give me just that."*

Tony Cotton, Portsmouth ship visitor previously commented: "*Peter is not motivated by rewards. He delights to serve the seafarers and will continue doing so until he can no longer climb gangplanks!"*

*(There's more from Peter on Page 25.)*







# “Thanks for Care beyond the Call”

*From the Captain...*

During our vessel’s lay-up period in Larne, we were grateful to receive several visits from pastor Sam, who has been in contact with Hurtigruten and HX for many years and is clearly well acquainted with our ships and crews. He took the initiative to come onboard and spend time with the crew, which was genuinely appreciated.

On one occasion he led Christmas carol singing, accompanied by his wife, Pauline, who joined him onboard to provide musical guidance on the piano. Her contribution added greatly to the atmosphere and helped bring the crew together in a warm and uplifting way. On another visit, the pastor conducted a ship’s blessing, which was received with respect and gratitude.

During the Christmas visit, the pastor and his wife also brought Christmas presents on behalf of the seaman’s mission, which were given to all crew members. This was a very thoughtful gesture that was warmly received and further contributed to a sense of care and inclusion onboard.

Our Filipino crew members in particular greatly appreciated these visits. Many of them are practicing Catholics, and the pastor’s understanding, openness, and genuine care for their spiritual well-being meant a great deal to them while the ship was laid up away from home.

His visits contributed positively to crew morale and showed a heartfelt dedication to pastoral care at sea. We are thankful for both his and Pauline’s time, kindness, and continued support, and we would gladly welcome them back onboard in the future.

We really appreciated your visits and the support you gave and hope to see you back on board any of our ships in the future.

All the best to you and Pauline.

Until we meet again!

Maikel

*Staff Captain, Spitsbergen*










# DONATING TO SCFS



SCFS relies on the faithful support of individuals who see partnering with us as a part of their ministry, and an expression of their love for God and those He has created.

If you would like to be a part of this work, and would like to support financially, you can give a **one-off gift** or set up **recurring gifts**. We always encourage tax payers to **Gift Aid**, and would also be happy to discuss **Legacies** with you.

Find out more at
**http://scfs.org/links**

**Bank Account Details**
Account name (UK & IRL): Seafarers’ Christian Friend Society
**UK:** Sort Code: 01-08-52, Account: 04027078
**Ireland:** BIC: AIBKIE2D, IBAN: IE22AIBK93638347038130
Sort Code: 93-63-83, Account: 47038130

**Charity Numbers:**
209133 (UK)
20200276 (RoI)
SC054032 (Scotland)

# Shots Were Fired Across Her Bow

By Charles Hancock, Trustee





On the 25th September 2023 the Irish Navy, the Irish Rangers, the Air Corps, the Customs and the Garda Siochana joined forces to arrest the *MV Matthew* as it entered Irish waters.

Despite repeated requests to halt, the ship altered course away from Ireland. Warning shots were then fired across the bow of the ship and a platoon of armed Irish Rangers were lowered from a helicopter on to the deck and control was taken of the vessel. A pilot was put onboard and the ship was escorted into Cork harbour and berthed in a remote quayside.

Gardai went on board and a search revealed 2,523kg of cocaine, with a street value of over €150 million, hidden in a lifeboat.

The Gardai arrested five of the senior officers and later an additional three were detained. All mobile telephones were confiscated for forensic analysis. This left a crew of 13, made up of 12 Filipinos and 1 Iranian, detained on board the ship. Many of them were young and inexperienced seamen and were now cut off from the outside world and their families.

Within hours of the arrival of the ship in Cork and despite the presence of armed Gardai, Colin Jenkins, the Cork port chaplain for the Seafarers' Christian Friend Society, was allowed on board the ship, where he discovered a very frightened crew who claimed that they had not been paid any wages for two month's work, and that they were without fresh water to drink and running low on basic provisions. Colin assured them of his support and prayed with them.

Next morning he arrived at the ship with a consignment of fresh water and, much to the crew's delight, a McDonald's meal for each.

I joined him on the ship and liaised with the senior Gardai officer in charge and gathered a shopping list of urgent supplies to maintain the crew on the ship. The Gardai officer on the ship was an experienced and understanding man who appreciated our support to the remaining crew.

The following day Colin and I returned to the ship with fresh bread, Irish butter and packs of noodles and more fresh water. The crew were not allowed access to their mobile phones and we were instructed not to use ours or permit the crew to use them.






They really appreciated our support and shared their worries regarding their families and the fact that they were detained on the ship with no charges being made against them and no release date being provided. They were in fact being held prisoners on the ship.

Colin continued to visit the ship almost daily and returned a few days later with a box of fresh fish which I had caught (Filipinos love fresh fish!).

The crew had received a visit from the Filipino consulate in Dublin and were told that efforts were being made to repatriate them. However, when I visited the crew again I found them in a desperate state of anxiety and depression. They had still not been allowed to contact anyone and were fearful that they may not get re-employed as seafarers. I contacted the Filipino consulate and informed them of the need to move swiftly as in my opinion, desperate people do foolish things.

The crew were saying that they were literally penniless, having not been paid for two months, and even if they were flown to their countries, how could they travel home with no money.

The Seafarers' Christian Friend Society is a charity established to support seafarers in time of need and these men were in desperate need. It was decided by the Trustees to open an Emergency Fund and grant each seafarer a gift of 100 euro to help them and to relieve some of the pressures they were under. I prepared 13 separate envelopes containing €100 along with a short letter of support from the Trustees of the Society.

I assembled all of them in the mess room and explained that the SCFS wanted to assist them. I then handed out the envelopes and together the crew opened them. It is difficult to describe their response other than to say that many tears were shed and many hugs received. To say that they were grateful would be an understatement!

It was not just the matter of the money, it was the fact that someone cared enough to do something to help them in their hour of need.

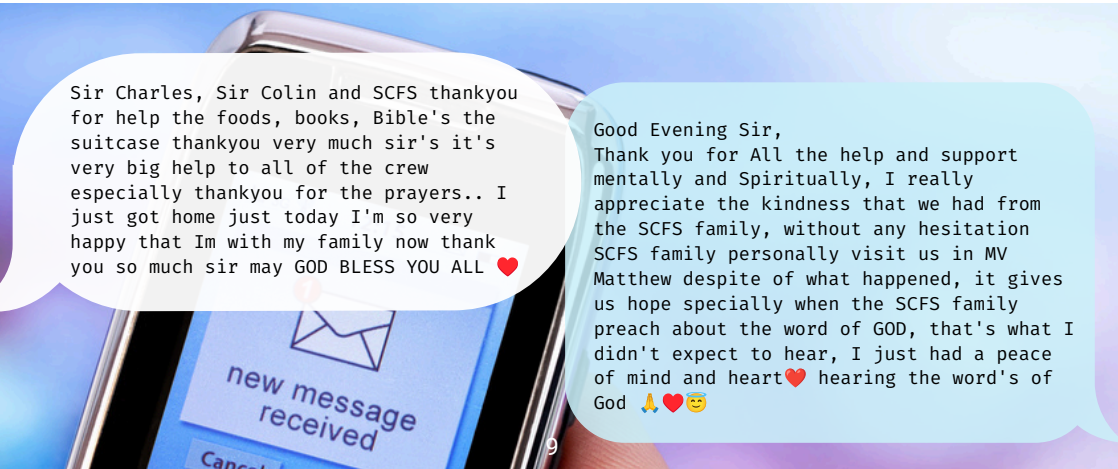
Upon leaving the ship that night, I informed the Gardai of what had taken place. Their response was to ask **"Who are you people?"**. My response was simply,

> We are the Seafarers' Christian Friend Society and we CARE for Seafarers

About one week later the crew were escorted off the ship to a local hotel prior to being flown home.

We have since then received a number of messages from the crew thanking us again for our support and care shown to them. Our response lies in the saying *"What would Jesus do?"* We hope we have done as He would do.

Since the arrest of the *MV Matthew* in September 2023 it has been docked within Cork harbour. SCFS Port Chaplains have been regular visitors to the ship, supporting the maintenance crew, providing them with frequent transport to the local supermarket for fresh provisions, Sim cards and warm woolly hats for the winter. Christmas presents have also been delivered to the ship since 2023. SCFS also provided them with a mailing address for the Revenue to send







them various documents.

The latest plan is that the ship will be taken to Turkey to be scrapped with a deadline of May 2026, but there have been numerous deadlines which have been missed. There has been a lot of press regarding the huge cost of maintaining the ship in Cork harbour which runs into millions of Euros.






## Star Care!

### Tony Cotton, Portsmouth

The SCFS Portsmouth team had the privilege of working alongside Captain Michael Ocampo of the *Star Care*, who was committed to his crew's wellbeing. On an earlier visit, he shared concerns that the crew were spending too much of their free time alone in their cabins. We discussed activities that might attract them to the crew mess and hit upon table football.

The idea was brought 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 table, we set about getting it on board. With excellent support from the ship's agent, delivery and boarding were smoothly arranged, and the table was installed on our next visit.







# Safe Harbour, Home Comforts

## Extracts from the Montrose & Cobh Visitor Log Books

*Seafarer cabins & lounges create a touch of home in ports.*

Dear hosts!
Thank you very much for your support. I really appreciate your warm welcome and that you thought about every detail in your cozy shelter. I took a hat & scarf. They will remind me of you on cold days. Best regards to all of you and God bless you!

Sergi from Serbia

Thank you Sir for welcoming us. We clean also your centre for paying back for giving chance to stay and visit your very simple and very nice place. We are glad to be here and thanks for the freebies and for the good internet. Hope to see you again on our next trip.

M/V Rimini

Thank you for your care & support to sailors away from home. Your dedication makes life at sea more bearable. Grateful for your commitment to our seafarers.

M/V Wilson Dundee

We want to express our deepest appreciation for your selfless act of service and kindness. Thank you so much.

MV Eurica

Big thanks from our crew. You help to us in this difficult times. Very nice to have like this small cabin with all different needed stuff and of course free wifi.

M/V Eemst Transporter

Many thanks for the cookies & clothes. They will keep us warm for sure! And thank you for the plant, I will give it a nice home.

Ankie Crew

It is my first time to work on a ship, and it is my first time in a foreign country and I am happy because there's still something like this in another country. There's a lot to see, a lot to read and it's heartwarming because most of the books inside are about the Word of the Lord, and I am grateful because there are kind people who provide various things for the seamen. Thank you very much and may the Lord continue to bless you.

Decmer, MV/Eurica

Cobh Crew Lounge is a peaceful and welcoming spot, perfect for relaxing after hectic days at sea. The staff are incredibly friendly and make you feel right at home. The lounge offers strong Wi-Fi, making it easy to connect with loved ones or stream in peace. Indoor games add a fun touch to your downtime. It's clean, cozy, and well-maintained. Definitely one of the best places to unwind during your port stay!

Indian female crew member










"Montrose seafarer centre, thank you very much. God blessed."
Amrey, March 2026



**Our Portland chaplain partnered with the Portland Port Group to upgrade the Seafarers' Lounge with essential Wi-Fi and restroom facilities. SCFS appreciates the port authorities' support through ship visits and shore amenities. This improved space gives crews a vital place to relax, connect with family, and receive encouragement during precious time ashore.**



# Bridging the Distance

## The Renewed Mission of SCFS Philippines

In every season, God faithfully calls His people back to His mission. For SCFS Philippines, the year 2025 became a season of renewal, prayer, and fresh direction from the Lord.

Like many ministries around the world, the years following the pandemic brought challenges. Activities slowed down, connections became difficult, and ministry opportunities were not as active as before. Yet even in those quieter years, God was preparing the next chapter for the ministry.

The Lord raised up a new Board of Trustees to lead SCFS Philippines with renewed vision and purpose. Through prayer, planning, and seeking God's direction, the leadership developed a strategic plan centered on one clear mission: to bridge seafarers and their families to Jesus and His Church.

This mission recognises a deep reality in the maritime community. Seafarers often spend long months away from home, facing isolation, pressure, and uncertainty at sea. Families also carry their own burdens while waiting faithfully at home. In the midst of these realities, many are searching for hope, purpose, and spiritual direction. God has called the ministry not only to care for seafarers practically, but also to guide them toward a life-changing relationship with Christ and meaningful connection with the local church.

As the ministry sought God's wisdom on how to effectively carry out this mission, the Lord revealed four important stages in a believer's spiritual journey. These became known as the 4Ss:

- **Secular** – those who have little or no relationship with God
- **Seeker** – those beginning to ask spiritual questions and search for truth
- **Saved** – those who have accepted Christ and are growing in faith
- **Serve** – believers who are ready to live a life dedicated to serving Jesus and others

Understanding these stages helped the ministry create programs that intentionally guide people step by step toward spiritual maturity.

One of the key initiatives born from this vision is the *Values Formation Program*. This program is designed to be conducted in maritime schools and organizations in partnership with churches within the local community. Its purpose is to help participants develop values that will enable them to live wise, disciplined, and productive lives both at sea and on land.

More importantly, the program introduces biblical principles in practical and relatable ways. As participants apply these truths in daily life, many begin to discover for



themselves that the Word of God is living, powerful, and true. Through this process, hearts are opened to the Gospel.

Those who become seekers are then invited into fellowship within local churches, where they can continue to grow through discipleship, prayer, and Christian community. The prayer of the ministry is that these individuals will eventually become mature believers who dedicate their lives in service to Jesus Christ.

By God's grace, the ministry has already seen encouraging beginnings. The Lord recently opened the door for SCFS Philippines to partner with a maritime school and a local church to launch the *Values Formation Program*. This partnership has created a meaningful opportunity to minister to future seafarers even before they begin their careers at sea.

Seeing God move in this way has strengthened the faith and vision of the ministry team. Today, efforts are underway to develop similar partnerships with other maritime schools, maritime organizations, and shipping companies. The hope is to build stronger bridges between the maritime community and the body of Christ, reaching not only present seafarers but also the next generation. We are so deeply grateful for the partners God has faithfully provided to support and strengthen this ministry.

As ships cross oceans and crews travel far from home, the mission remains clear: to bring the hope of Jesus Christ to seafarers and their families wherever they may be.

We pray that the Lord will continue to prosper this ministry, open new doors for outreach, and use every program for His glory. May more seafarers and families come to know Christ, grow in faith, and live lives devoted to serving Him.

*"For from Him and through Him and for Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen."* Romans 11:36

**SCFSP Ministry Team**









## SCFS Shuttle Service!

MNWB
MERCHANT NAVY WELFARE BOARD

Seafarers' Trust

We're very thankful to **MNWB** (Merchant Navy Welfare Board) and **ITF Seafarers' Trust** (International Transport Workers' Federation), along with our generous supporters, for helping us purchase cars that are essential to the ministry. They enable us to visit seafarers in port and hospital, and to offer lifts to shops, church and local places of interest.





# A Sailor on the Rocks

*Finding Hope in Limerick Hospital*

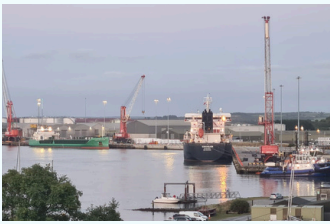
When the *Petra* sailed into Foynes in November 2023, the Limerick SCFS team met the crew and learned that the ship's cook, Noel Silva, had become seriously ill and been admitted to University Hospital Limerick. (*Petra* means '*rock*', a name that would take on deeper significance in the weeks that followed.)

The SCFS team coordinated with the ship's agent to locate Noel and understand his immediate needs. We supported him through regular visits, prayer and practical help such as clothing, toiletries and a phone charger. Noel endured a very difficult five weeks in hospital. He initially spent several nights in intense pain on a trolley in A&E before further tests led to a diagnosis of severe lymphoma. He received his first round of chemotherapy in Limerick before being cleared to return to the Philippines to continue treatment.

Although this was an extremely difficult time for Noel, made harder by being far from his family, it also became a powerful opportunity for Christian love to be shown. SCFS volunteers and Christians in Limerick supported him faithfully with practical help, visits and prayer. Filipino staff brought him Filipino food, and churches in Limerick regularly prayed for him.

It was wonderful to learn that through many conversations and prayers, Noel put his trust in Jesus, the Rock of our salvation. In mid-December Noel returned home to the Philippines, where he was able to spend Christmas with his family. Before leaving, he said, ***"Thank you to each and every one for the support, love and prayers extended to me."***

Some months later, we were saddened to learn of Noel's passing, yet we rejoice that he is now at home with his Saviour. His family later expressed deep gratitude for the care, kindness and prayers shown to him during his time in Limerick.










The International
Christian Maritime Association
*congratulates*
The Seafarers' Christian Friend Society
— on 180 years of faithful service —
to those who go down to the sea in ships and do business on the mighty waters.
icma.as
INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN MARITIME ASSOCIATION

**The Seamen's Christian Friend Society (SCFS)**, as it was first named, has been offering the hand of friendship to the seafaring community and to all those involved in maritime industries, trades and activities since **1846**. The story of how this came about, and how it has been sustained for 180 years, is one of God's faithfulness and the dedication of many men and women through successive generations.



The Napoleonic Wars were raging across Europe in the first decade of the nineteenth century. With the return of peace, however, many demobbed soldiers and sailors were in need of work and care and there was popular support for 'Poor Jack'; the 'Jack Tars' of the Royal Navy and merchant marine, as the ordinary seamen were known.



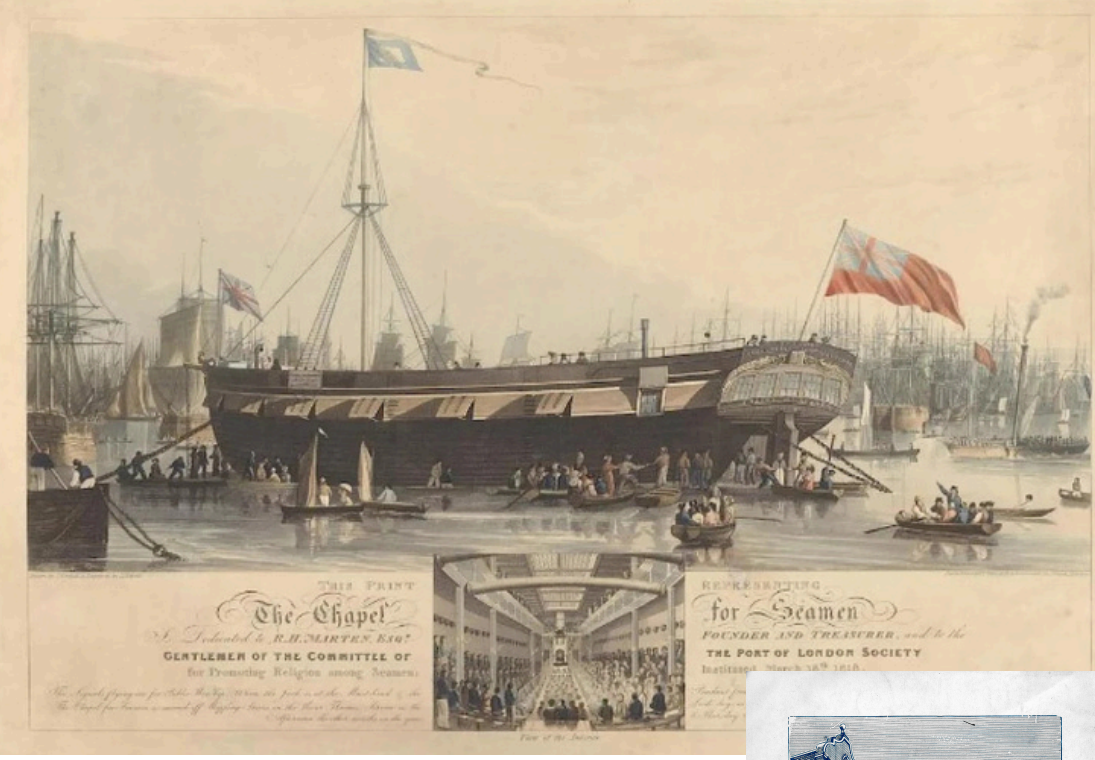
One of these was a former midshipman who had served on board HMS Agamemnon at the battle of Copenhagen in 1801. He later became the **Rev George Charles Smith**, more commonly known as 'Boatswain Smith'. By his own account "the divine process of conversion began on my birthday, March 19th 1803." He was 21 years old.

This came at a time of emerging Christian humanitarian societies and organisations aimed at providing spiritual and material aid to "the deserving poor", amongst whom mariners were often included. Smith was prodigious in founding organisations to tackle the social needs of his day, amongst them the Thames Waterman's Friend Society, the Merchant Seamen's Orphan Asylum for Boys, the Maritime Penitent Female Refuge and the Shipwrecked and Destitute Sailors Asylum.

In 1818, he was instrumental in forming the Port of London Society for promoting religion among seamen, followed a year later by the Bethel Union Society (these societies merged in 1833 to become the British and Foreign Sailors' Society). Smith began to use a 'Bethel Flag' hoisted on ships to advertise that he was to preach or conduct a prayer meeting. In 1818 a floating chapel, nicknamed 'the Ark' and seating over 500, was moored at Wapping. Other floating chapels followed in Liverpool and Hull.




Smith was a man of tremendous devotion and energy whose driving influence was his love of the Lord Jesus Christ and his deep concern for the spiritual welfare of seamen. He was also a controversial figure, branded a fanatic by some but described by others as "the unwearied, disinterested, faithful



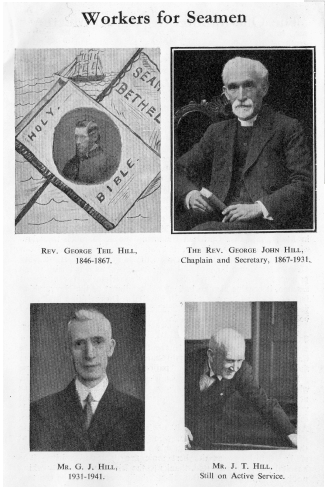

labourer for the seamen of the world."

In 1826 he became the minister of Wellclose Square Church in London, which he renamed the Mariners' Church. Under Smith's direction a sailors' home was added in the Square in 1835 with accommodation for 100 (later 500) seafarers. To this day the street bears the name 'Ensign Street'. The Mariners' Church is believed to have been the first land-based church especially for sailors and their families and it was here that the organisation later to be known as the Seamen's Christian Friend Society (SCFS) began to take shape.




In 1845 financial pressures caused the Church to close and Boatswain Smith withdrew from the work, but the Society that he had founded pressed on under the leadership of Rev George T. Hill who had been working amongst seafarers for nine years.

He became the first leader of a new body called the Seamen's and Soldiers' Evangelical Friend Society. The minute book for the Society contains a record of their first meeting held on 14th January 1846. Two years later, on 20th June 1848, the name was changed to the Seamen's Christian Friend Society, better known simply as SCFS. Although the



Mariners' Church had closed, SCFS maintained its presence in the east end of London well into the twentieth century, with its headquarters in St George Street opposite the old London dock wall.

**George T Hill** remained as the secretary of the Society for many years and was succeeded in that position by his son, **George John Hill**, who held the office for sixty-two years until his own death in 1931. He, in turn, was succeeded by his son, **John**, who held the post until September 1941. Thus, three generations of the same family had guided the Society almost to its centenary year.

Outside London, the second half of the nineteenth century saw many more port mission stations being established. Ports on the coast of Cumberland, Lancashire, Cornwall and Devon were included, as well as Ramsey on the Isle of Man and Galway in Ireland. A Scottish work also began in Ayrshire. As well as port missionaries, a range of facilities was provided including sailors' rest homes, institutes and Bethels, which offered food and accommodation.

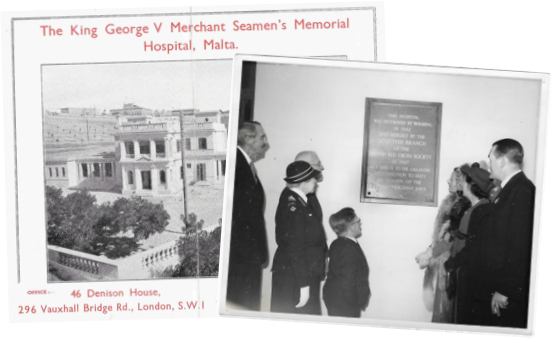
The First World War brought unprecedented demand for welfare services and spiritual support. It is estimated that approximately 15,000 merchant seamen working on British and Empire vessels lost their lives between 1914 and 1918 and many more required care and support.



As part of this response to the war, the Society took on responsibility in 1922 for the King George V Seamen's Memorial Hospital in Malta. The hospital was intended chiefly to serve the needs of merchant seamen, but it also cared for Royal Navy personnel and their families, as well as residents and visitors to the island.

The Second World War brought many threats to the island and to the hospital, which was destroyed by enemy action in April 1942. Yet even in the midst of the war one of the SCFS Chaplains observed: "Is it not a thousand times worthwhile if King George V Hospital can bring some of its patients, merchant seamen, and others, into personal contact with Christ, to become filled with loyalty and personal love to Him and then to scatter from Malta to every seaport in the world… carrying with them that love… activated by a simple faith?"

The hospital was subsequently rebuilt and formally reopened by the Countess Mountbatten of Burma in November 1948.




However, when Malta gained independence in 1964 and the Royal Navy left, the hospital placed a major strain on the Society's finances and it finally closed in 1967, ending 45 years of faithful service and witness.

In 1946 the Society celebrated its centenary. At the front of the annual report for that year was a picture of the Society's patron, King George VI, and a quotation from his June 1944 call to prayer, which included the line, "We shall ask not that God may do our will, but that we may be enabled to do the will of God." A sentiment that the Society has sought to follow.

In the years after the Second World War the work ebbed and flowed with some ports closing and others opening to new

missionaries. In 1989 SCFS assumed responsibility for the work previously undertaken by the Merchant Navy Christian Fellowship and in 1990 the Christmas edition of the 'Helmsman' magazine contained reports from Belfast, Cork, Dublin, Dundee, Greenock, Hull, Grimsby, Liverpool, Portsmouth, Southampton, Teeside and Tilsbury. Overseas reports from Hamburg and Antwerp were also included.







**Today**, the Society has port chaplains and volunteers around the UK, Ireland, Europe, Australia, the Philippines and St. Lucia. Often this work is done through affiliated organisations that share the same objectives and beliefs. The Society seeks to maintain good working relationships with all those working for the welfare of seafarers, port workers and their families. In 2023 the Society rebranded with a new logo, website and social media presence and, most importantly, a new name whereby the Seamen's Christian Friend Society became the Seafarers' Christian Friend Society. This last change reflects the growing role of women throughout the maritime industries.

Shipping and technology have changed almost beyond recognition since Boatswain Smith first hoisted a Bethel flag to conduct a prayer meeting aboard ship. Small sailing ships have given way to modern container vessels and ultra-large crude carriers. However, Smith's passion for the Gospel and the welfare of seafarers and their families is what continues to motivate all those who work and volunteer for SCFS.

In a world where more than 90% of goods are transported by sea and any interruption to the major shipping lanes can have global consequences there will continue to be a need to support the welfare of seafarers worldwide. SCFS is committed to exploring new opportunities and methods to tend to the spiritual, physical, emotional and practical needs of the seafaring community.

*Compiled by*
***Andrew Browne**, friend, and former Trustee of SCFS*



## The Message in our Logo

(New brandmark introduced in 2023.)

OUR MISSION
**A warm, friendly helping hand**

+

OUR UNIQUE FIELD
**Context-setting sea waves**

=

SCFS

## Previous Logo

SCFS

# thank you to all the SCFS Knitters!













Thank you to all our wonderful knitters for the thought, talent, and time you so generously give to support seafarers through SCFS. Seafarers truly appreciate these lovely handmade gifts, and it means so much to them to know they are remembered and valued—particularly as many often feel forgotten or unseen.

We love to acknowledge our crafters on the Knitters' page on the SCFS website by posting stories about our knitters/groups as to how they came to be involved in knitting for SCFS. *Would you share your story?*

We have been so encouraged at how our knitters have embraced Project Woolly Hat. There is now a new supply of the logo badges (supplied by Anthony, of AA Promotional Products) available in the office. Drop us a message to share your story or to receive more badges at **hq@scfs.org**.





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# PORT NEWS, UK & Ireland

## SCFS Dublin, Ireland

Jaeguen Bae



What a joy to witness two Filipino crew members from a weekly Bible study take the step of baptism, openly declaring their commitment to Christ. One, who came to faith through a fellow seafarer last year, shared his desire to one day lead his own family in faith. Although the morning began in freezing temperatures of minus one degree, the Lord graciously gave us a perfect window of sunshine and calm weather at noon for our time at Sandymount Beach.

It is always heartwarming to reconnect with seafarers who joined a weekly Bible study a few years ago, and to see how they have grown in their faith. On a recent visit to a containership, Mark was delighted to see me again. As his ship calls at Dublin almost every week, he is now encouraging others on board to join a new Bible study. Please pray that this group will truly "taste and see" that God is good and discover that His Word is sweeter than honey as they enjoy Jesus and His teaching.

On another visit, I had a wonderful opportunity to share the Gospel with a Turkish crew. Their bosun, who told me he practices shamanism (a traditional spiritual practice), asked for a Bible. When I returned the following week, we had further conversations. He shared that he is reading John's Gospel, so we looked at God's Word together. I value your prayers that we will have more time to read the Bible together, and that he will come to know Jesus personally as Saviour and Lord.

A Christian Filipino chief officer came to me and asked me for a full Bible for a Bible study at home. He has around 9 members in the Bible study group. He has been challenged to lead a Bible study where he goes.

On a chemical tanker, I was thankful to lead a worship service with all its 8 crew members for around ninety minutes. I was encouraged to see them take twelve Bibles. Please pray that they will enjoy reading their Bibles and know Jesus as their refuge and strength at sea.

Please pray for Wenleo, a Filipino bosun. Two weeks ago in Dublin Port, a 30 kg lashing bar struck the left side of his face. He was taken to two hospitals, and doctors said his eyesight has thankfully not been damaged. He is currently staying in a hotel in Dublin for further checks. Please pray that he will recover quickly.

Dublin SNAPS















Dear friends and partners in ministry,

To convey the variety of ships we host in the lovely Port of Cork, here is a snapshot from two Sundays when I brought crew ashore to church.

One ship was in port for four days, allowing the crew a rare chance to rest and go ashore. One young crewman, Mohammed, had not been off the ship for seven months. He joined the ship at just 17 and he described the intense loneliness as the only African crew member, among others from Türkiye, India and Azerbaijan.

Kirstin, some visiting friends from church, and I were able to minister to the crew with gifts, hats and Bibles, sharing the Gospel and praying together. I also brought Mohammed ashore for the first time since he joined the ship. His cousin met me years ago and had told Mohammed that he might meet me in Cork! It was his first time stepping ashore in a country outside of Nigeria, and his first visit to a Christian church. He was delighted to meet fellow Nigerians, including a lady from his own area who shared familiar food he had been craving. I also helped him buy a simple pair of shoes, which meant a great deal to him.

Mohammed described spending two weeks in Ukraine with missiles flying overhead! They even had to turn the lights off at night, and it was very cold. A frightening ordeal for all the crew! He also shared that he has 30 brothers and sisters back home in a dangerous 'hot spot' region of northern Nigeria. As I left the ship, one Muslim crew member came to thank me, saying, "*You really help us. Your positive attitude lifts our spirits.*" Later, Mohammed messaged me from a Russian port to say, "*I will never forget you.*"

The *Majestic Princess* carrying over 1,300 crew is a world away from Mohammed's bulk cargo ship. I coordinated with members of the onboard Christian fellowship from Guatemala, Argentina and the Philippines to come to church, visit our Crew Lounge in Cobh, and enjoy lunch with our family. The day was a refreshing break for them, a chance to worship, rest, de-stress and enjoy the Irish countryside. One crew member, Marvin, said, "*Your life is a blessing. Keep doing what you are doing.*"

These two ships could not be more different - one with 22 crew and one with over a thousand. However, even in a crowd there are many lonely and broken hearts who are crying out for Jesus. They face completely different challenges, but no matter what the problem Jesus has the answer. It is a privilege to serve them all. Thank you for your prayers.

Cork SNAPS















## SCFS Belfast, Northern Ireland

Sam Cowan

On this 180th Anniversary of the Society, our hearts are full of praise to the Lord as we rejoice in His goodness and faithfulness.

It is greatly encouraging to receive news from C in Türkiye, a former Chief Engineer who came to Christ through the work in Belfast. He shared that he has begun meeting with other brothers and sisters in Christ in his hometown.

A Kenyan seafarer, who recently received a Bible during a ship visit, sent a message to say how thankful he is. He shared that God's Word is impacting his life, encouraging him, and renewing his peace on a daily basis.

I was honoured when a small group of Christians asked me to conduct a worship service for the crew, saying, *"A church service just like home, Pastor."* Over twelve attended, and afterwards I was told that this was the crew's very first service on board.

As the officer and most of the passengers were French, there hadn't seen to be a need to hold a service before. I thank God that He opened the door for this crew to worship together in Belfast. We pray this will be the beginning, and that they will continue to grow in faith.







## SCFS Aberdeen, Scotland

Iain Sanders



It is a real joy to see how the Lord continues to open doors for us in the port. Recently, I was asked to provide a Bible in Tagalog and English, and I was delighted to do so. On another ship, the Hindu captain asked me to take his Christian crewmates to church. I met a "watchman" and as we chatted, I asked him if he had ever seen a book without words. I was able to share the Gospel with him through the use of the wordless book.

The crew of the *Eastern Vanquish* asked if I could take them to Asda for bottled water, and my car boot ended up full to the brim. I also received a phone call asking if I would meet some of the men at Bon Accord shopping centre. One needed a present for his wife and another needed reading glasses. Even on simple trips like that, there are opportunities to speak about the Gospel.

What stays with me most are the earnest requests I keep hearing:

*"Pastor, I had a broken heart but God healed it. Please read the Bible to me"; "Pastor, we don't have much time. What Bible verse are you reading to us?"* and *"Pastor, please recite John 3:16 to us."*

What encouragement when Alistair approached me after a deputation saying, "I have spent all of my life working at and around sea. I want to spend my closing days sharing the Gospel with seafarers." Alistair now regularly visits ships and at Easter his wife, Janet, joined us. She is Filipina and was able to converse with the Captain in Tagalog.

On one visit, Alistair and I were met with suspicion at first because they thought we were Port Control, but once they realised who we were they gave us a list of needs, especially jackets and jumpers. When we returned with supplies, one seafarer danced a little jig of joy when he received his jacket.

## SCFS Shetland, Scotland

Harry Pottinger



It is still early days for ship visiting in Sullom Voe, and I am delighted to share a recent tanker visit.

Getting on board was an effort in itself. From the jetty it was 83 steps up the tower to the gangway, then ten steps to the main deck, followed by two flights of stairs into the accommodation. Thankfully, crew were on hand to help, and I received a warm welcome from two Filipino seafarers.

One thing that struck me immediately was the mess room. The crew mess and officers' dining saloon are the same space, with no bulkhead dividing them. It's unusual, but ideal for SCFS visitors.

As I set up my stall, a few curious onlookers gathered. What followed was a steady flow of conversation, quiet moments mixed with busy spells, and this time I had almost constant chat at whatever level each seafarer felt comfortable. Even without praying with or for anyone it was one of the most rewarding Tanker visits I've enjoyed.

I really feel for tanker crews. Nearly all say, *"We have had no welfare visitors."* I always put up the SCFS mess room sticker, encourage use of the QR code, and remind Filipino crew of the welcome at SCFS Manila.

I spoke with 19 of the 24 on board, my highest number to date. There were memorable moments with everyone, from John the messman, amazed that the items really were gifts, to the chief officer choosing a teddy for his young son, and the engineer cadet accepting a Bible and magazines. In 46 years at sea, it was my first time meeting a motorwoman and a female AB ("Able Seaman").

The visit ended as it began, simply and sincerely. As I left, Harish, the second engineer, said, *"Thank you for visiting us."* It does not matter who says it, master or AB, cook or engineer. Every "Thank you" gives me a lift as seeds of friendship are sown.







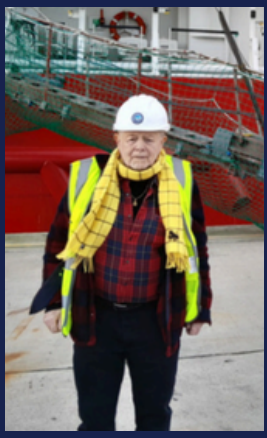
Helmsman SNAPS Helmsman SNAPS Helmsman SNAPS Helmsman SNAPS Helmsman SNAPS

Aberdeen SNAPS









## SCFS Montrose, Scotland

Mike Burleigh



The Montrose team - Mike, Elie and Michael - are grateful for the strong relationship and continued support of **Montrose Port Authority (MPA),** who maintains the Seafarers' Cabin. Recent improvements to the entrance have made the cabin safer and more weatherproof, including a new storm-tight door and frame, plus substantial new steps and handrails.

The cabin provides an all-weather space where seafarers can find welfare support, rest and recreation, and enjoy the free Wi-Fi provided by MPA. With ever-shorter turnaround times and limited shore leave, crews especially value 24/7 access, even when the cabin is unmanned.

Inside, comfortable seating and refreshments (tea, coffee, soft drinks and snacks) offer a warm welcome, alongside a music centre and guitar. Our interactive book displays invite crew to take a book or use digital resources to support life at sea, personal well-being, or Bible study.

The visitors' book records seafarers' appreciation for practical items such as woollen hats, warm clothing, and toiletries, along with small gifts for families, including soft toys, handbags, baby clothes and storybook Bibles.

Our main ministry focuses on equipping fathers and grandfathers with children's storybook Bibles, encouraging them to choose age-appropriate books and prepare themselves to read and explain the Bible within their families. We encourage men to see this as a meaningful way to contribute to their children's education and faith.

Over many years, we have collected Christian books in a wide range of languages. It gives us great pleasure to see a seafarer's face light up when offered a book in his own language.

Alongside this, our picture-based Scripture messages, displayed in crews' mess rooms and produced in the main languages of the sea, serve as a lasting reminder of our visit.

It is most encouraging for us as ship visitors when we receive messages from seafarers about how these books have helped them. Rio Gallego Ganza, for example, progressed from AB cook to ship's master in just ten years and now encourages his crew to take an active interest in their seafaring careers and to live faithfully as believers, honouring the Lord at work and within their families.















## SCFS Portsmouth, England

Peter Wells



*"Everyone is looking for you!"* Jesus replied, *"Let us go somewhere else to the nearby villages so that I can preach there also. That is why I have come."* Mark 1:37-38

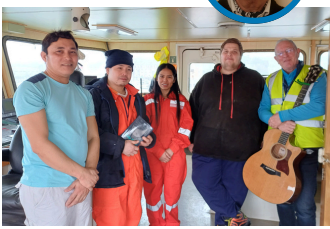
This year, several members of the Solent Team have been dispersed to different places, despite the ongoing need and opportunity among seafarers. Hermie returned to the Philippines in February to care for her parents, Peter underwent knee replacement surgery in April, and Tony's wife, Trisha, had an operation in May. As a result, the team's leadership has been significantly affected.

Brian, Angela and Tony have manfully stepped in, and many seafarers have been blessed as a result. We have also been encouraged from more ship visits by Phil, who, together with Richard, managed a cruise ship visit.

It is interesting that in this verse, Jesus speaks of visiting nearby villages. The nearest church to the commercial docks in Portsmouth is All Saints, and we have long prayed for a place nearby where we could take sailors for Christian fellowship. The minister at All Saints, Alex, has joined us as a ship visitor and is currently undergoing training and a member, Rob, from St. Georges, is considering the Lord's calling to him.

It has also been encouraging to have Hermie's sister and brother-in-law, Marie and Brian Rourke, on several visits. Meanwhile, Tony, Peter, and Hermie (admin) have been involved in Zoom training for a new ship visiting team in Ketchikan, Alaska, led by our Port Chaplain John from St Lucia in the Caribbean! It has been amazing to see port chaplains from several countries sharing in this work.

We deeply appreciate your prayers, that the saving word may continue to go out - *"until He comes."*









## A Visit That Needed Wisdom From Above

Peter Wells

We always pray for wisdom and the leading and guiding of The Holy Spirit when going on board ship, but sometimes the need feels more urgent than others. That was the case a few weeks ago when, heading alone to a small vessel, I was warned by the friendly agent that he had never met such an angry Captain! My prayers became a little more fervent.

On arrival, I was welcomed by the Dutch Second Officer and the Indonesian Chief. After giving out gifts and talking about families and voyages, I shared the Good News of Jesus using the EvangeCube. The Second Officer said he was not a Christian but was interested. The chief, who was a Muslim, was occupied with figures and had his back to us, but it was clear that he was listening!



Soon after, the Ukrainian Captain appeared, and it wasn't long before he humiliated his Chief Officer in front of us all, accusing him of not doing his job properly. You could feel the tension rising! I then had a brief time alone with the Captain. He shared the difficult situation at home in Ukraine - his wife remains in a dangerous area, and he can only meet her

at the border during leave. I asked him what hope he had. *"AM I God?"* he said. I offered to pray for him and he was grateful but wanted me off the ship.

As I left, praying, I felt prompted to email him a booklet recently received from our German SCFS colleagues, *True Stories of Hope.* The first true account is of a man who planned to kill his Captain, and there were many similarities between this story and what I had just witnessed. I was unsure how it would be received, but noticing it was available in Indonesian, I sent that version for the Chief.

Those of you who know about emailing to small ships will know that quite frequently they do not get through. To my surprise, the Captain replied immediately, thanking me. Encouraged, I sent a copy in his own language and again received a grateful response. We trust the Lord will work through His Word, which *"will not return… empty"* (Isaiah 55:11).





**The ship and crew above are for illustrative purposes only.*





*We are grateful to Frizelle Shipping Services for their sponsorship of this special edition of the Helmsman.*
*(See Page 3 for Andrew Frizelle's anniversary message.)*


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Those who go down to the sea in ships, Who do business on great waters,
They see the works of the Lord, And His wonders in the deep.
*Psalm 107:23-28*

# PORT NEWS, Europe

## SCFS Amsterdam, Netherlands

Theo & Yvonne van Zuliekom



Recently, I received a message from a Russian Chief Officer asking me to visit him. I had first met him in 2024, when he was the only Russian among his crew. A few days later, I visited his vessel. He was deeply grateful and visibly moved by the wood-burned plaque I had made for him. He and his family are Christians, and he told me he plans to give the plaque to his mother.

On another ship, a female cadet and an older colleague, both from the Philippines, selected clothing and a suitcase. They also asked for wood-burned plaques for themselves. I had the privilege of praying with all three of them.




I met Indonesian seafarers on several ships, who were very surprised and delighted when I spoke to them in Bahasa Indonesia. A sailor from Peru was especially happy to receive a wood-burned plaque. He knew that I already had several "Peruvian friends" and wanted to be part of the group too.

We distributed many Sailor Bibles and QR-code Bibles in various languages. Yvonne continues to make beautiful cuddly toys for the seafarers' children and grandchildren. These little dolls bring great joy and are always received with big smiles.

The crews also received practical gifts such as clothing and travel bags. We love seeing happy seafarers. God is at work.

*Theo has been faithfully serving seafarers in Amsterdam for over 50 years. At 75-years-old, he continues to share the Good News of Jesus, and offers encouragement, friendship and practical help.*







## SCFS Lisbon, Portugal

João and Rute Nereu



It has been a privilege to visit ships in Lisbon every month. What once felt almost impossible has, by God's grace, become a regular opportunity.

The Lord has opened the way, and it is a real blessing for all involved. Each visit reminds us just how much these moments matter. We are continually encouraged by the welcome we receive on board and by the openness of those we meet. Many seafarers are eager to talk, to be prayed with, to feel seen and supported while far from home.

However, this blessing also brings a new challenge: finding the time to visit more ships. If we had more availability, we could do even more, as the need and desire for these visits are clearly growing.

We ask for prayer and wisdom to discern how best to move forward, to find time for ship visitation as we seek to serve and encourage those we meet.

*We value João and Rute's heart for seafarers and their faithful service, while balancing full-time work and family life.*

## SCFS Malta

Brian Scicluna

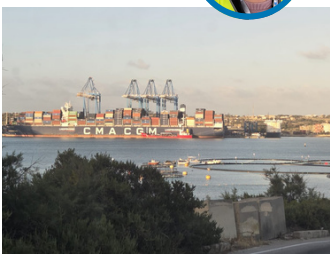


Over the past weeks, the Malta team of SCFS has continued reaching out to seafarers and port workers through several ship visits across the main container port. During these visits, we had the privilege of speaking with more than 50 seafarers and port workers from many different nations and backgrounds.

One particularly encouraging aspect of this period was that two ships specifically contacted SCFS Malta because crew members had previously experienced the ministry of SCFS in other ports. It was a powerful reminder that even small acts of kindness and care leave a lasting impact and that the witness of SCFS continues far beyond a single port visit.

In addition to offering friendship, conversation, and spiritual encouragement, the team was able to assist crew members in practical ways. We helped transport seafarers to appointments and supported personal needs during their time in port. In one case, we received a request to deliver medical supplies to a crew member who was unable to leave the vessel due to restrictions on shore leave. Being able to respond to these practical needs continues to open doors for meaningful ministry and reminds seafarers that they are not forgotten.

We are grateful for every opportunity to serve and connect with seafarers visiting Malta. Thank you for your continued prayers and support for our ministry.








## Lisbon SNAPS











# Two Couples. One Calling.

## Serving Seafarers in Hamburg, Germany



We are Olga and Mirco Rühle, and Lydia and Micha Lamaack. Since 2025, we have been serving together in seafarers' ministry with SCFS Hamburg. Although our professional backgrounds are very different, we are united by one common passion: to meet these people, who often live in challenging circumstances, with practical help, true hope, and the love of God.

Mirco trained as an aircraft mechanic and most recently worked as a project manager. Olga first worked as a medical assistant before later studying theology. Micha is currently completing theological training at master's level and has also completed studies in Social Work and Diaconal Ministry. Lydia is a state-certified physiotherapist who joyfully works with children in a rehabilitation clinic.

We became aware of seafarers' ministry through our predecessors, Volker Lamaack and Martin Otto, who have faithfully served with SCFS for many years. Mirco has known about the ministry for a long time because Martin and his wife Monika are part of his church. Micha, on the other hand, grew up connected to this ministry through his parents, Volker and Doris. Through their reports, testimonies, and personal commitment, we came to understand what a unique opportunity this ministry offers to share God's love in a very practical way.

Our first impression of the work in the ports was both moving and sobering. In many ways, seafarers belong to a forgotten people group. Millions of people work every day to keep global trade running, transport goods across the world, and ensure that supermarket shelves remain stocked — yet hardly anyone sees the people behind the ships. Months away from family, loneliness, constant pressure to perform, limited social contact, and difficult working conditions are part of everyday life for many seafarers. They want to provide a better future for their families, pay for their children's education, and create hope for the next generation — often at a very high personal cost.

The majority of our ministry consists of ship visits. Personal encounters are especially important to us. Every seafarer has his own story, struggles, fears, and hopes. Therefore,



we seek to meet each individual personally, to listen carefully, and to show appreciation and compassion.

Again and again, we hear deeply moving stories. Some time ago, Mirco met a Filipino seafarer and fellow believer named Erwin. During their conversation, Erwin said something that has stayed with us ever since: *"I was not there for the birth of my own child."* There are few moments in life more emotional for a father — and he had to miss it because he was working at sea. Encounters like this remind us of the sacrifices many seafarers make every single day for the sake of their families.

That is precisely why it is so important to us to bring light into these often difficult and lonely situations — through practical help, a listening ear, friendship, and the hope of the Gospel.

Micha also experienced a very moving encounter during the SCFS Conference 2025 in Manila. A Filipino seafarer named Leo approached him and unexpectedly said, *"I know your father."* During their conversation, Micha learned that his father, Volker Lamaack, had met Leo briefly before 1994. God used that seemingly small encounter in a powerful way, and despite a very troubled past, Leo came to know Jesus Christ. Decades later, he recognised Micha in the Philippines. For us, this was a deeply emotional reminder that even short encounters can have a lasting and eternal impact.

We are very grateful to be part of SCFS. One of the greatest blessings of this ministry is the worldwide fellowship, the mutual encouragement, and the shared prayer among Christians serving seafarers across different countries and cultures. It is inspiring to see people from different backgrounds united in bringing hope, dignity, and the love of God to seafarers around the world.

As SCFS celebrates its 180th anniversary, we are especially thankful for all those who have faithfully carried this ministry through the generations. We pray that many more seafarers will continue to experience hope, comfort, encouragement, and a new perspective through this ministry in years to come.





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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 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. In **Ireland**, you need to provide a "Tax Relief on Donations" Enduring Certificate (CHY3). Thank you!

Congratulations to our tenant SCFS on 180 years!

# Inspire business centre Ltd

## BUSINESS, WORKSHOP & CONFERENCE FACILITIES

Flexible office, workshop and commercial space designed to help businesses **grow and succeed.**




### BUSINESS & WORKSHOP UNITS
High quality space for a wide range of businesses.

### CONFERENCE & MEETING FACILITIES
Meeting rooms with modern technology and flexible booking options.

### FLEXIBLE LEASE OPTIONS
Short or long term agreements to suit your business needs.

### FREE PARKING
On-site parking and superfast broadband throughout.

### BUSINESS SUPPORT & ADMINISTRATION SERVICES
On-site support to help your business thrive.

### CONVENIENT DUNDONALD LOCATION
Just minutes from Belfast City Centre with excellent transport links.

## INSPIRING BUSINESS INNOVATION & GROWTH

028 9055 7557
enquiries@inspirebusinesscentre.co.uk
www.inspirebusinesscentre.co.uk
Inspire Business Park
Carrowreagh Road, Dundonald
Belfast BT16 1QT

## BOOK A VIEWING TODAY

Quality space. Flexible solutions.
The perfect environment for your business.

# LIFE AT SEA
# ...ISN'T ALWAYS A CRUISE

Seafarers caught in war zones such as the current conflict involving Iran are facing immense trials:

- Around 20,000 seafarers are now stranded, many running low on essential supplies such as food and water.
- Crews remain on edge, living under constant stress and uncertainty as ships are trapped in dangerous waters, some witnessing neighbouring vessels being struck by missiles.
- Exchanging crews has become nearly impossible due to restricted airspace and the dangers of entering the conflict zone, leaving many sailors stranded on board far beyond the end of their contracts.
- There are reports of drinking water contaminated with diesel, limited access to medical care, and even instances of ship owners abandoning their crews.
- Families at home worry and, in many cases, struggle to maintain contact.





Seafarers often share about their anxiety and heartbreaking situations such as:

- A captain shared his deep concern for 11 crew members who were due to fly home from Dublin but are now stuck with no confirmed flights.
- A 47-year-old cook who has finished his contract, spoke of missing his granddaughter yet being unable to return home.
- A young seafarer, grateful for Bibles for his girlfriend and younger sister, anxiously waits for news on flights home.

Other seafarers share their concerns and fears for family members living in war-torn countries.

SCFS workers bring comfort and encouragement, sharing the hope and love found in Jesus.

Thank you for continuing to pray for seafarers enduring these incredibly difficult circumstances.

SCFS
Seafarers' Christian Friend Society

Scan me with your phone.

## Want to know more?

Enter "scfs.org/links" into your browser. There you'll find lots of useful links, including options to sign up for SCFS updates, join the Mobilize supporter group or the private Facebook group for knitters! Alternatively, contact us using the details below.

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