

GOODNEWS

From The Ministry to Seafarers

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Keeping in Touch

How seafarers have done it since the 1800s

by Carolyn Osborne

From postage stamps to cell phone 'top-ups', one of our most useful services continues to be facilitating the links between seafarers and their loved ones.

David Rozeboom, Assistant Chaplain of the Ministry to Seafarers, tells the following story:

"On a Friday afternoon, Vadim, Third Officer on the *M/T Omega Prince*, was able to come to the Centre for a few hours while his ship was loading fuel at the Shell terminal. Thanks to Skype (an internet-based phone service), his laptop computer, and the wireless internet connection in the Centre, he was able to speak with his wife and three year old daughter in Lithuania.

"It was quite entertaining, since Vadim started speaking to them while he was sitting outside the Centre before it

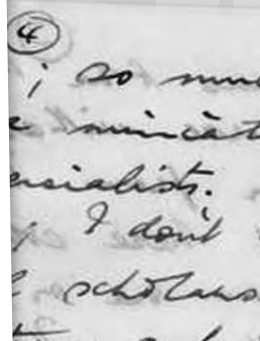
opened. He then carried his laptop—rather like one would carry a child—to one of the tables inside, speaking with his daughter the whole time. The energetic little girl waved and showed us some of her toys. This visit strengthened Vadim's connection with his home and, for a few hours, brought him again into the family's life."

When our Centre first opened in 1862, one of the goals was to ensure that seafarers wrote home to their families. The following extract is from the Annual Report of the Montreal Sailors' Institute in 1871-72:

The Superintendent posted 3,351 letters for various parts, an evidence of the extent to which the writing tables are used, and of the quantity of your letter paper and envelopes (gratuitously supplied) which is consumed.

When telephones became accessible, we started to count the number of calls we connected, but seafarers did not indulge in lengthy conversations, as calling far-flung countries was expensive. Fifteen years ago, we had to charge more than \$3 a minute to China, and \$2.65 to the Philippines. Then phone cards came on the scene, vying for the seafaring dollar. Today, a card costing \$2.50 promises 2¼ hours to India and five hours of chat time to Poland!

Mariners' House set up its 'internet corner' in 2001 and the technology really united families. This became poignantly evident when a Turkish seafarer held up a jogging suit (on sale in our 'Seachest Store') in front of a web cam so that he could benefit from his wife's advice on whether or not to purchase it for himself!



**** WANTED ****

VOLUNTEERS
(THIS COULD BE YOU!)

Interested in what we do? Want to help out? **Volunteer!** From 1 week to 1 month! Housing and travel expenses covered. Come and serve God's kingdom in Montreal, Quebec.

For more information, check out the Volunteer section at www.ministrytoseafarers.org.

Do You Love Me?

by John Struyk, edited by Berber Bosch

Saturday, July 25th, 2009 was a memorable day at the Seafarers' Centre in Montreal. Michelle DePooter, our chaplain, and Donsavio Francis (who goes by Don) renewed their marriage vows. Nothing special, you might say. Well, we think it was something out of the ordinary.



Don and Michelle were first married on February 12th, 2008, in Bombay, India. Regretfully, none of Michelle's family could be present. Since their wedding had to be planned within a span of two weeks, the notice was too short to obtain visas, despite some efforts. Instead, cell phones were used to let the DePooter family listen in. Michelle's father even gave her away and said a prayer. (Picture a microphone next to a cell phone—it worked!)

Michelle and Don were together for two weeks after their wedding and then Michelle had to return to Canada and Don returned to sea. She did not see her husband for 6 and 1/2 months. In the meantime, Don got his immigration papers and today, thanks be to God, Don and Michelle live happily together in Montreal.

Fast forward: On July 25th, 2009, led by the pastor of the CRC in Montreal and in the presence of many friends and family, Don and Michelle renewed their vows. They kissed again, they cut the cake again, and gave each other their wedding rings. As part of a wonderful ceremony, as Michelle and Don exchanged vows, *all* couples present were invited to renew their vows as well, which was memorable for many.

The real question set before us that day and every day is, "Do you love Me?" Not, "Are you a faithful church goer?" or "Have you been faithful with your gifts and tithes?" but "Do you love Me?" We here at the Seafarers' Center hope that all of you and all the seafarers we minister to will today say, "Yes Lord, I love You!"



Christmas Parcel Drive 2009

As many of you know, each year we give out over 1600 parcels to seafarers from over 70 different ships! These gifts are received with much thankfulness, happiness and excitement. This year we've set our goal at 1800, to reach as many seafarers as we can. As you also know, seafarers spend a lot of time away from those they love, and, at a time when we celebrate God's gift of His Son to us, a gift speaks volumes about the love that God extends to all men and women of all tribes and nations. With each parcel we have the opportunity to reflect Christ's Kingdom where each and every person is precious and cared for by our Almighty God.

We hope that this year you will once again put some of your time and resources to reach out to these men and women by supplying Christmas parcels for The Ministry to Seafarers parcel program. To find out more about how you and/or your church can be part of this outreach, please check out www.ministrytoseafarers.org or call 514-844-1476 to have instructions mailed to you.



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