

# GOODNEWS

From The Ministry to Seafarers

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## A Worldwide Ministry

by Michelle DePooter

For two weeks last May, I had the opportunity to visit the seafarers' centre in Santos, Brazil, and see how they do things there. It was an excellent experience to see another port ministry and share ideas with the staff and chaplains who work there. While I was in Santos, I helped out at the seamen's mission which is open all day. Most of the staff members were fairly new, so I was able to share my experiences from Montreal.

The ministry in Santos is an ecumenical ministry involving the Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church, so they were interested in knowing how our ministry works in Montreal, because we are also an ecumenical ministry with the Catholic, Anglican, and Christian Reformed Churches.

The seafarers' centre in Santos operates similar to Montreal. The chaplains visit ships, and transport seafarers to the centre or to shopping areas the same way that we do in Montreal. The

centre has plenty of phone booths and they provide some of the best phone card services of any port in South America. Many crew members do not have enough time to do any shopping in the city, so the centre offers a few necessities that seafarers can buy.

Port ministry occurs worldwide, and although it is often not visible to everyday people, the seafarers are incredibly thankful for the service we provide.

While I was in Santos, I met several seafarers who I knew from Montreal, which was a surprise! Many of the people I see in Montreal, I never expect to meet again after they go home on vacation. In Montreal we are unusual because many of our ships return every 3 or 4 weeks, so we have an opportunity to really get to know those on board, and many of them return year after year on the same ships. But even though we might not meet those men and women again in Montreal, the seafaring world is small and other

chaplains have the opportunity to minister to them when in other ports.

1 Corinthians 3:5-7 says "What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow."

As chaplains, we do not work independently. God is in charge, and although we may not see the results of the seeds we plant, God makes them grow. Perhaps one day, when I'm visiting another port, I'll meet a seafarer who will tell me how God has worked in their life after coming to Montreal and meeting the chaplains, staff, and volunteers here. Seeing how the work goes on in another port on the other side of the world reminded me that a seed I planted in Montreal may be watered by Fr. Samuel in Santos and then the harvest reaped by Fr. Stephen in Dubai.

God works in wonderful ways and works through the many people who are involved in seafarer ministries worldwide.



# In a World of Conflict Seafarers Find Rest in God

by David Rozeboom

There are about 30 armed conflicts currently being fought around the world, according to Project Plowshares, an ecumenical Canadian organization that monitors weapons proliferation and armed conflicts worldwide.

Many seafarers live in or near regions in conflict. In fact, many from countries belonging to the former USSR have military experience. Other nationalities may have worked on Indian naval ships currently blockading the coast of Sri Lanka. Perhaps they are Karen people who are being mistreated by the military government in Myanmar. This adds a worrisome dynamic to a seafarer's relationship with their home. They are primarily interested in finding out what is happening in their home country. They want to know "the feeling on the street". Is there a threat to their home and their family's life? If so, they must assess what threats their family is facing.

Most seamen see these conflicts as "just politics"—two groups vying for control of a certain asset. Others are more concerned that the government, or a terrorist group, desire to destroy a certain part of the population. This is truly disconcerting when one sees that a few thousand lawless fighters can destroy whole cultures!

It is wonderful then to hear a seafarer say, "I trust God to take care of my family." That response has been given already in Psalm 27. *"Though an army besieges me, my heart will not fear, though war break out against me, even then will I be confident. One thing I ask of the Lord...that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life."*

The heading of the psalm doesn't specify what situation David was in when he wrote it, but the confidence he had applies to any situation in life. Whether working at sea or living on shore, even when someone is physically threatened on many sides, the only place of rest is in God.

# Christmas at M2S

by Brenda Dyas

We would like to thank everyone who helped to make Christmas at M2S a blessed experience for so many seafarers in 2008. It was a beautiful season of parcel distribution which began in November. We gave out 1,725 parcels to 74 ships! Thank you to the many involved in purchasing, packing, wrapping, and delivering the parcels!



Throughout the winter, we were also able to have on-hand coats, hats, gloves, and scarves for those in need. Thank you to everyone who collected the coats and sent them in!



Our Christmas Eve Reveillon and candlelight chapel service was a wonderful success with over 80 guests attending, including 44 seafarers. We sang hymns and celebrated communion, giving thanks for the salvation we have in Jesus.

Again on Christmas day, we enjoyed a dinner with volunteers, staff, and seafarers. The chapel service was a meaningful story of redemption, and was followed by singing of Christmas hymns. Even though the seafarers were far from home and family, they enjoyed a special time with friends in celebration of the birth of Christ.



## The Ministry to Seafarers

**Chaplain:** Michelle DePooter  
**Asst. Chaplain:** David Rozeboom  
**Administrator:** Brenda Dyas

Place d'Armes Postal Station  
Box 815  
Montreal, Quebec  
Canada H2Y 3J2

Tel.: (514) 844-1476 or (514) 849-3234  
Fax: (514) 849-2874  
min2seaf@colba.net  
www.ministrytoseafarers.org