



## Trustee's Letter

*Chairman Mr Thompson and  
Trustee Mr McAvoy  
came together to mark  
Merchant Navy Day  
on 3rd September 2020*



Dear friends and prayer partners,

What strange and challenging times we are living in. Covid-19 has disrupted so much but we have as a society continued our vital work everywhere, even when we were unable to board vessels. Mentioning Board, a significant level of activity has been taking place. Firstly, our chairman Mr Jeffers has stepped back to trustee and Steven Thompson has stepped up to take his place. Please read their articles that follow. Your prayers for both would be greatly appreciated.

Two stalwart trustees are retiring - Mrs Daphne Jeffers and Mrs Elizabeth Thornton who joined when the society faced significant financial challenges. We salute their support.

I am delighted to confirm that we have new trustees in Dr T Maze, Revd S McNie and retired port chaplain Mr D Robertson. Two further trustees are about to join the Board. They bring geographical strength, governance strength, Port Pastors/visitors/evangelists support and experience to assist the ongoing work.

We are delighted to receive a Royal Greeting from our patron, Her Majesty the Queen, which is reproduced later in this update.

King David had a very challenging life and covid-19 could mirror the challenge when King Saul sought to kill him. His response was praise in Psalm 100 v 5, "For the Lord is good and his faithfulness continues through all generations".

Covid-19 has impacted the societies normal income from churches as our port pastors etc. cannot undertake deputation work. We look to our faithful God to supply all our needs.

*Archie McAvoy*

Archie McAvoy, Trustee

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Patron: Her Majesty the Queen • Registered Charity No. 209133 • Registered Co. No. 378765

## A Message from our New Chairman



**Hello to our SCFS family across the globe.**

I am Steven Thompson, the new Chairman of SCFS. Here are some interesting and many uninteresting facts about me. I am 57 years old, I live in Dundonald, just outside Belfast quite close to Belfast port and only a few miles from Stormont where the local Northern Ireland government is based. I have been married to Elaine for 32 years and have two children. Kelsey is a schoolteacher at a nearby secondary school in Saintfield, she is married to David an Elim minister and they have just had their first child, Peyton Maggie Hume, who is the new love of my life. My son Kyle is a biologist and works for Queens University. Kyle is on a team at the university doing ongoing cancer research. Kyle is married to Lily a teacher in a local school for children with special needs.

These five members of my close family are all Christians and are a constant source of both pride and inspiration. I only came to Christ as a 39 year old and my wife and young children prayed constantly for me. I hope I still have many years left to repay that faith and touch the lives of many others and bring them to share our Lord's wonderful salvation.

I grew up in a local housing estate. Ballybeen Estate. My Granddaughter Peyton is now the 5th generation of my family to live or have lived there. I love Ballybeen as it helped to shape the man I am and I am so thankful for that. It is a hard, working class estate but a wonderful community exists there and I now strive to put back a little of what it gave to me. Ballybeen is actually the 3rd largest estate in Europe with around 8000 people living there.

I got involved in SCFS in 2016 through my good friend Archie McAvoy, an incredible Christian and constant source of encouragement. He asked whether I would consider becoming a trustee and I needed no second invitation. I began to meet the other people involved and see and hear the ministry in action.

I was overwhelmed. It is fair to say that in 2016 SCFS was on its knees but myself and Archie had been given a vision to restore former glories and, ably assisted by Mervyn Jeffers and Don Thornton, we began work to achieve this. Now 4 years on and we have set up a new HQ in Inspire Business Park in Dundonald. We have built a team around us. John Lowry our project manager, Tom Henderson our accountant and very recently three new trustees, Revd Stephen McNie, Dr Trevor Maze and Mr Dave Robertson.

We were encouraged last November to bring together many of our port missionaries and their wives to a conference and time of fun and fellowship in Belfast and we hope to do this again soon. We will not rest on our laurels. We aim to bring new trustees to the team and other staff members. We have also brought new volunteers and associates across Europe and aim to establish a stronger support network for all at SCFS to enable them to carry out their heartfelt mission to the seamen and women of the World's seas.

It cannot be through me that a man who grew up in Ballybeen estate finds himself as chairman of one of the oldest charities in the world - is only because of God's wonderful grace and vision.

I will not let my Saviour down. He lifted me up and I will give my best to SCFS to help us all save others from the storms of life.

*Stephen Thompson*

Steven Thompson

## Letter from retiring chairman, Mr M Jeffers

Remembering early days on the docks of Cork with Walter Burrell.

About late 1967, having offered my help to Walter, if required, and having received a conviction that I should help him on the Docks - fear gripped me - I was painfully shy and the devil put every reason in my mind to back out. Eventually, Walter said, "Are you coming or not!" My reply - "You better name a day and place." The first evening was like walking into someone's house without an invitation.

Like Peter, I followed afar off! As Walter walked past the cabins, he knocked on a door - a voice said, "Come in!" - Walter said - "You'd better go in!" In fear and trepidation, I entered and introduced myself to the two young male occupants. God makes no mistakes, for here were two young men whom He had prepared with hungry hearts and wanted to know the meaning of the gospel.

Coming off that ship, my feet were hardly on the ground with excitement and praise - I knew without any doubt that that was where God wanted me to serve him.

During the following seventeen years, I witnessed many occasions where God opened so many doors and changed the lives by His wonderful Grace and timing and I gradually became more involved in the running of the SCFS.

There were nervous times - like being followed after being on board a ship from Eastern Europe. Another time a certain Captain stating that he knew where both Walter and I lived, knew about our families and when they took over Ireland we would be liquidated as we were too far gone for indoctrination!

A ship from Bulgaria arrived and we had no literature for them - the next morning a parcel arrived with Bulgarian literature posted some time earlier from either Norway or Sweden. What a God we serve. Walter going away on deputation in the afternoon had promised he would see a departing Captain and also would mix cement to finish a pathway he had prepared for his wife Mary.

Knowing it was not possible to do both - he decided on the Captain!

When returning before lunch a dumper came down the cul de sac where Walter lived, and the driver called out, "Mister could you use a load of cement?" Just the correct amount to finish the job.

Covering the Docks, particularly when Walter was on deputation and found the Port authorities extremely helpful by phone informing on the movement of shipping - before the days of mobiles and apps.

Visiting the tanker 'Universe Ireland' in Bantry Bay (with a bicycle on board to travel the deck!). The tanker took 10 miles to slow down on reaching the Port. We held a service on board and had brought out 30 Gideon Bibles on the tugboat delivering us to the tanker. (The tugboat skipper John later gave his life to the Lord.)

Asking how many were on board, the Captain stated 29 - oh! and there is another joining tonight!

The Port of Cork had open Docks which were frequented by many girls - we often drove them home - God also did a marvellous work in some of their hearts.

I can think of three straight off, whose lives were transformed by the power of God and went on to be powerful witnesses to the Grace of God.

Walter was a great example of practical prayer - on a visiting French Navy Ship an officer refused me point blank to leave any literature in the mess room but suddenly changed his attitude and said he would take the literature and put it in the said mess room. Being doubtful that he would carry out what he said, I questioned him again - he replied, "I guarantee you I will place it for the crew."

On rounding a stairway, I found Walter in earnest prayer.

On another occasion, a group of Christians were trying to transfer a ball hitch from one vehicle to another but the bolts wouldn't budge no matter what effort was applied - Walter stopped them and prayed - if it is the Lords will, let the bolts open - they then came off with little effort.

Walter held an Annual Meeting in a school premises for many years.

These were unique in that they brought together Christians from many different churches and fellowships - he would show hundreds of slides many the same from year to year and the meeting often went on approaching 11.00pm. His argument for long meetings was that as he was often on the Docks until all hours - it wouldn't do the congregation any harm to be out late that night!

A minister said that he waited until the slides started - then went to a hospital to do some visiting - returning, the slides were still going, so he wasn't missed!

Walter was married to a saint - Mary never knew who or how many Walter might bring home to be fed and when visiting supporters arrived in Cork, they were often accommodated necessitating the changing about the children's bedrooms. An illustration of the cost involved on the family and the challenging wisdom required to balance the workload.

I was privileged to be taught how to witness by one who didn't miss an opportunity, whether at a petrol pump, crane drivers, lorry drivers, dockers or seafarers.

Grateful memories of God's servant who was enabled to lead an unknown number into the Kingdom - Heaven will have some remarkable accounts to share.

*Mervyn Jeffers*

Mervyn Jeffers

## Letter from HRH Queen Elizabeth.



WINDSOR CASTLE

John Lowry Esq,  
Seamen's Christian Friend Society.

Please convey my warm thanks to the Chaplains of the Seamen's Christian Friend Society for their kind letter, sent on the occasion of Merchant Navy Day which was held on 3rd September.

As your Patron, I was pleased to be reminded of the service of the Society's Chaplains in ports around the world since 1846.

I send my best wishes to you all.

ELIZABETH R.

9th October, 2020.



Keeping supporters informed of the Lord's work in ministry is vital, however postal costs have increased twice in 2020 and in these challenging times the society needs to manage its resources effectively to be good stewards of the resources He provides.

If you are willing to receive a newsletter by email, you can you save the Seamen's Christian Friend Society £1.50 (the cost of printing a newsletter and posting it to supporters).

If supporters opt to receive a quarterly email newsletter, this is equal to an annual saving of approximately £12000 and would be used to directly support the work in ports. I appreciate not all supporters are able to access email and we are pleased to be able to keep the service going to keep you informed of the ministry.

If you are happy to receive quarterly update Newsletters by email, please contact us using the email address: [headquarters@scfs.org](mailto:headquarters@scfs.org) and title the email "mailing list".



# PORT BRIEFINGS



## BELFAST PORT



During the initial stages of covid-19 many chaplains were restricted from accessing seafarers for a variety of reasons. Although **Chaplain Sam Cowan's** access was restricted, he still managed in partnership with **SCFS Australia** to get support to a seafarer who was struggling with severe mental health issues. As a result, the seafarer was repatriated and reunited with his family. Mr Cowan has been having weekly prayer, devotions and study sessions with seafarers and has been able to attend a few deputation meetings to encourage supporters.

## VALERO PEMBROKE DOCKS

**Reverend Norman Gilbert** is looking forward to returning to port and is encouraging his supporters to begin packing Christmas presents that will be delivered to ships when they arrive in Valero Pembroke docks. This year Revd Gilberts support team will be required to manage their Christmas packing within guidelines to ensure good standards of hygiene are managed and therefore ensuring the safety and minimizing risk to seafaring crews. Reverend Gilbert has been reaching out to his congregation and crews using YouTube sermons.

## GREENOCK PORT

Prior to covid-19, **Chaplain John Burleigh** was injured whilst onboard a vessel. Praise the Lord John's injuries have now healed. The society is praying to get John's access to the port opened up again. Please pray that John is able to return to the port in the Lord's service. During the covid-19 period John has not been resting. He undertook to renovate and

improve the local Barnards Gospel hall in Greenock and has successfully completed this project in service to the Lord. Please pray for John Burleigh's access to Greenock port to be renewed with full unrestricted access. Please also pray for the Glebe vision and Greenock shipping route.

## MIFI DEVICES



The **Merchant Navy Welfare Board** in conjunction with **ITF Seafarers Trust** have continued to support this project to give chaplains and port visitors the ability to carry these devices providing crews with direct access to WIFI, and enabling them to contact families and loved ones.

## IPSWICH PORT

Ipswich port is served through **Chaplain Keith Oliver** assisted by his wife **Henriette**. During the pandemic Keith became aware that there were many oil tankers sitting permanently at anchor up and down the eastern coast. Concerned for the welfare of the crews the Lord opened up the opportunity for Keith and Henriette to have gifts of love care packages delivered on to these ships through a port contact of Chris Hanna in Portsmouth.



## PORTSMOUTH TEAM



2 members of S.C.F.S. Solent team in Portsmouth Peter Wells and Chris Hanna delivering messages via YouTube

The team at Portsmouth have continued to enjoy access to vessels and crews though they lost the ability to go on as a team and were reduced to one-member access. This did not deter them and they continue to serve the Lord with their usual infectious enthusiasm and continuing with Bible studies. **Peter Wells and Chris Hannah** have been managing much of the visits between them and **John Budd** has recently taken on a book reviewing project with **SCFS Chaplain Volker Lamaack**. We pray the Lord continues to provide them with access in port and that restrictions are removed from all ports.



## DUBLIN PORT

**Reverend Jaeguen Bae** serves the Lord in Dublin port. Reverend Bae actively participates in online ministry as well as travelling into Dublin port where he serves the Lord with seafarers.



Reverend Bae actively encourages and ministers to many church groups upon merchant vessels. He remains active in his service to the Lord during these unusual times and appears to seize every opportunity to serve the Lord.



## PORT BRIEFINGS

### CORK PORT



**Chaplain Colin Jenkins** continues to serve the Lord in the Port of Cork. Enjoying access to many vessels, Colin journeys into port daily where he ministers to crews and provides access to phone SIM cards. Seafarers rely on the ability to get phone cards to be able to contact their families when they have no access to WIFI. Colin and Reverend Jaeguen Bae from Dublin port manage bible studies and services with crews in port and also using online and social media resources. Colin is concerned for the mental wellbeing of crews who are enduring conditions beyond anything seafarers have previously had to endure.

### MERCHANT NAVY WELFARE BOARD

**Merchant Navy Welfare Board** have been hosting multi agency covid-19 meetings designed to keep those charities and businesses with an interest in seafarer's welfare up to date with government policy and issues influencing the lives of seafarers. The meetings have been a great success with several positive decisions being influenced as a result of the discussions. However, despite several positive recommendations and attempts at governmental level to get seafarers repatriated in a timely manner, there are still major hurdles to be overcome. Please pray for all of the world's governments that they honour the sacrifice seafarers make in service to the world economy and let them return to their families.

## HEADQUARTERS NEWS

### SCFS welcomes three new volunteer chaplains

The Seamen's Christian Friend Society has welcomed two new chaplains in Northern Ireland. **Pastor Benjie Quilario** will be serving the Lord in Belfast port and **Chaplain Andrew Burns** will be serving the Lord in Warrenpoint port. Both chaplains are awaiting the finalization of the processes to get their port access completed. Please pray for their smooth access into the ports and that the Lord will provide them with many opportunities in His service.

### GHENT AND TERNEUZEN PORTS

SCFS trustees were pleased to welcome **Chaplain Alexander Ebersson** as a new volunteer chaplain working in two ports; Ghent in Belgium and Terneuzen in the Netherlands. Alexander is an experienced ship visitor in both ports and regularly attends the society's online prayer meetings. He has been a great new addition to the society and has greatly encouraged all. Please pray for Alexander's continued access to port and the Lord's provision for his ministry.



*Chaplain Alexander Ebersson*

**For regular updates on SCFS ministries in other countries log into <https://www.scfs.org/welcome> Where you will be able to access regular reports from the society's chaplains around the world.**

**Please encourage your fellowships and prayer partners to pray for seafarer's welfare that they may be repatriated and that they are able to overcome depression and suicidal thoughts. Please pray that many will come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour and let it all be to the Lord's glory.**



The founder of SCFS, **Rev G "Bosun" Smith's** empathy for seafarers was influenced through his personal experience of seafaring and through the battle of Copenhagen in 1801. The Lord kept Bosun Smith safe through battles where he experienced firsthand the horrors and brutality of war. It was as a result of a fever that Smith was removed from seafaring and brought him to hospital where a pious nurse opened his eyes to the Lord Jesus Christ. Smith came to know the Lord, later studied for ministry and was established as a pastor in Octagon Chapel, Penzance. Smith was drawn into a letter writing service that identified Christians onboard naval vessels. This letter writing service developed and resulted in the foundation of the Seamen's Christian Friend Society. Just as in the Napoleonic era Seafarers today find themselves at the forefront of a battle, although this time it is not between warring nations. The world relies upon seafarers for food, resources, materials for industry etc. and 90% of the world's goods travel by sea. Seafarers are the essential component that keep the ships moving in service to the world's economy. Please pray for seafarers who are enduring challenges beyond that experienced in the past. The rates of depression and suicide are at an all-time high and life aboard merchant ships today are about as challenging as one could imagine. Despite having been at sea for a considerable time, when vessels arrive at our shores it is often the case that the crews are not permitted to disembark thus compounding the sense of isolation. The fear of bringing the virus onto the ships is very real and should it occur would have a devastating effect upon a crew. It is becoming a regular occurrence for crew members to have been at sea for 18 months; that is twice the normal 9 to 11 month contract.