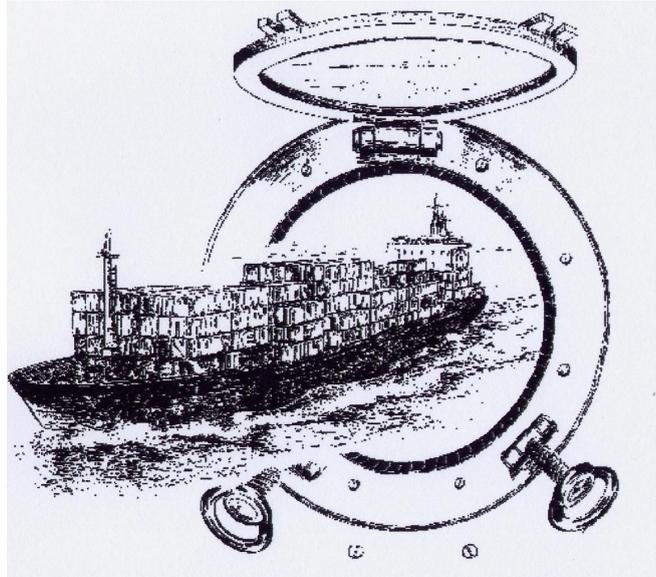


Through the Porthole

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*All Kings shall fall down before Him.
Blessed be the Lord God,
Blessed be His glorious name forever!
And let the whole earth be filled with His glory.
Amen and Amen. Extracts from Psalm 72*

June 2022

Dear Christian friends

This newsletter comes at a time when our country has just been celebrating the Platinum Jubilee of Her Royal Highness the Queen. 70 years on the throne. 70 years serving her country. 70 years witnessing before her people that there is a 'greater monarch' than herself whom she serves. She is an extraordinary lady who one day will be amongst the redeemed who will fall down before the King of Kings in honour and worship and sing His praises forever more.

It has already been more than six months since I had to stop sending care packages out to oil tankers. It was probably the Captain of one of these vessels who complained. He was invited to return the package, but he chose to keep it. The businessman who was not a Christian but had enabled hundreds of seafarers to receive scriptures asked me to stop until a solution could be found as he didn't want any more complaints. Meanwhile I was still going into the port of Ipswich and trying to have contact with seafarers from the quayside.

In March Henriette and I both got covid, which after the worst of the symptoms were over, felt more of an inconvenience than anything but in another way it gave us the confidence not to be so paranoid about

meeting people without face coverings. This was helpful when I finally started going back on board vessels. Seafarers seem to be amongst the last to get vaccinated but by April life on board ship was returning to normal and no seafarer's were wearing masks and most if not all were being allowed to go ashore.

It was around this time when a Russian Captain welcomed me on board his ship. His English was good and he and his crew were friendly but the conversation didn't get beyond small talk and it was only the Engineer who looked through the literature that I offered. However this and other ship visits which followed helped to give me the confidence which I needed to start mixing with seamen in close proximity again.

One of these ships was owned by a Dutch company which over the years I had become familiar with as their vessels have come here with onions from New Zealand or rice from America. This particular ship had Russian and Filipino crew and I was welcomed on board. Sorry I don't have a photograph of the happy faces that I met. It often doesn't occur to me until afterwards that to take a photo might have been possible. But the Filipino crew helped themselves to literature that I offered including children's Bible story books which they can take home to their families.

Another vessel, but much smaller, was staying in port a few more days and its crew were having a barbeque. Lots of smoke but lots of meat and also fish. I sat and chatted to them. Filipinos, a Belgian and a Russian. This time, but with their permission, I took pictures but the Captain didn't want you to see the barbeque and cans of beer around the deck. One of the lads was a believer and after giving out scriptures I had the opportunity to return to the ship two days later with more scriptures which led to more serious conversation about being a Christian.

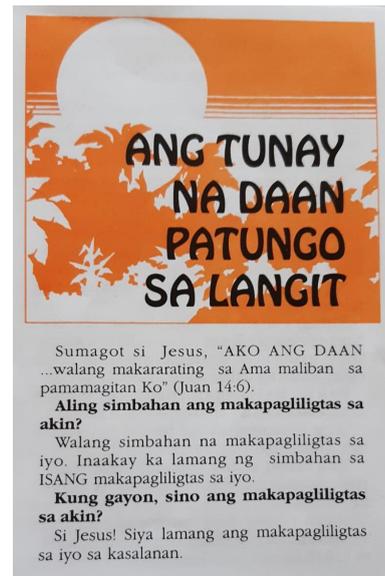


It has been many years since I saw a Bulgarian flagged ship in our port and so as I was free I went to visit. I didn't even need to go inside because there were enough crew outside on deck. They were still on

their lunch break but were coming outside to smoke. So I stood with the chief officer and got introduced to different crew members. Half of the crew were from Bulgaria and half from Ukraine. A Cadet who was just 20 years old spoke about his family and how they were all split up from each other because of the situation in his country. He asked for something to read in English so he and one or two others accepted New Testaments. The chief mate thanked me three times for a children's book called 'Bible for Little Eyes', so by the time I went away I had given scriptures out in three languages.

Perhaps some might think it old fashioned or not moving with the times but I still believe in a 'good old fashioned tract'! I would agree that to be able to download the entire Bible onto a mobile phone is amazing and has a place. But a tract which is short and simple to read takes a bit of beating.

The meaning of this tract is something like - the true path to heaven. The Cook, second from right in the picture, had finished his work. The third cooked meal of the day. He came into the mess room where other crew members were relaxing after a day's work. This tract was on the table and he picked it up. As he began to read it, without being asked, he translated parts of it into English. I sat and listened before commenting on some of the statements. What a thrill to know that whatever church background a person might have, if he has understood and believed that the Lord Jesus has died for his sins then he is saved for all eternity. The European in the picture is from Monrovia.



When I started going back on board ships in April it was the first time in two years. Henriette had been trying to encourage me to go on board before that, but I had been holding back. She spoke of the encouragement that we had enjoyed in the past when seamen had come to our home, and hoped that we might be able to do this again. The door to send packages to tankers via our Lowestoft contact seems to be shut but for more than 30 years, access to the port of Ipswich has remained open. During covid I was not refused entry, only asked during the worst of the pandemic to wait! I am still sending one package a month to Falmouth to be sent out to ships. December was when we last had a response from a crew in that place. A photo of two young women thanking us for the woolly hats. They were on an all English speaking tanker. We have also had letters of encouragement which have underlined for us that the work that the Lord has given us to do is not finished yet. A friend who is approaching 84 years old is still responding to the call to take the Word of God to seamen.

We appreciate the prayers and support of those who remember us.

Yours in His service

Keith and Henriette

p.s. In May we attended a conference with the SCFS. Data protection and keeping people's personal information safe was high on the agenda.

If you no longer want to be on the mailing list please let me know.