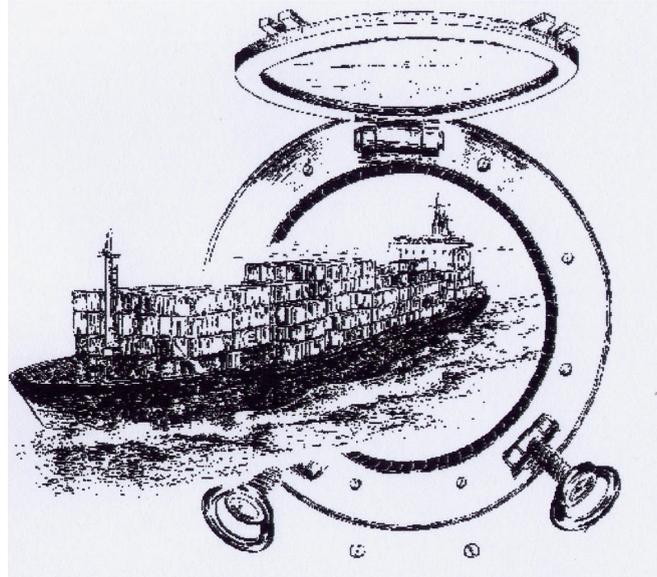


# Through the Porthole

27 Heath Road  
Ipswich  
IP4 5RZ  
England

Tel: +44 7484 606783

[keithandhenriette@gmail.com](mailto:keithandhenriette@gmail.com)



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For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword.  
Hebrews 4:12

Dear Friends

We can with confidence give out the scriptures to people who have never opened a Bible when we read this verse. If they will only open the Word of God, then they have the opportunity to 'look and live'. Coronavirus has rocked the world. An epidemic quickly escalated to pandemic proportions. People's lives have been turned upside, many by ill health, but others from the knock on effect of the crisis. Thousands of seafarers have been affected in this way. Stranded on ships, they couldn't get home because flights have been cancelled, and they are not even allowed ashore in case they catch the virus from others and bring it back to those on board. Cruise ships have been the focus of much media attention, dropping anchor within sight of land but without passengers.

At the beginning of lockdown I was required to stop visiting ships, both for personal safety reasons but also for the safety of crew. In the North Sea a few miles off the Suffolk coast I noticed on a live web site, huge oil tankers were at anchor. With a drop in world oil prices these ships have become storage tankers, and at any one time there have been as many as 16 - 24 tankers off the Suffolk coast. This is the equivalent of up to 500 men. Unlike the cruise ships these vessels go virtually unnoticed, but the plight of the crews will be very similar.



With the help of a colleague from Portsmouth who was himself a former Pilot boat Skipper, we have made contact with a man called Stefan (sudonum) in Lowestoft who runs a supply



vessel business and visits some of these ships. The Lord has touched his heart to be willing to help us reach out to these tankers with the scriptures. As far as we are aware, he doesn't have any church connections. Henriette helps me make up a Care Package which will have a John's Gospel, or New Testament, tracts, Ultimate Questions or other literature and a chocolate bar wrapped up in cling film and put inside a woolly hat. Sometimes I can identify the nationality of the crew, so I will then include appropriate languages. Then they are all put into a plastic mail bag with a letter to the Captain and crew, which includes contact details. An oil company in Immingham gives Stefan (who at the time of writing I still haven't met) names of tankers he is to go to

and he takes the packages with him when he visits. Stefan doesn't actually go on board these ships, but he sent me this picture to show us how they are transferred. We have direct contact with the ships agent ourselves and they too are willing to help. It is made quite clear to all who are in the chain what we are doing and why.

After I had used up my stock of hats the brethren in Crewe sent me a fresh supply. I got quite a shock when ParcelForce put the box on the doorstep. An estimated 240 perfectly stacked hats. Look!! Oh dear, Henriette thought we were getting a pandemic of a different kind. Prior to these coming she had said I was to accept no more hats!! But she hadn't anticipated giving them out in big quantities in the middle of summer.

Four months later and Ipswich Port Authority still has strict controls in place for people going on board ships but I am now allowed into the port to make contact at the bottom of ships gangways. This isn't ideal, but it is progress and of course I wear a face covering and observe social distancing. Before that I was able to get a few packages onto ships with the help of the ship's agents.

As we look ahead we give thanks for these opportunities and value prayer as we are giving out scriptures in the biggest quantities that we have done for a long while. We pray that they will be read and that they will speak to the souls of these lonely men. We pray that Stefan's heart will also be challenged, and that he will think about the scriptures that he is delivering to others. So far we have taken twenty three care packages to Lowestoft. We pray that these scriptures will lead many to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.



Yours in His service

Keith & Henriette

P.S. The Lowestoft branch of Gideons Int. are now also involved with supplying New Testaments.