



## Apostleship of the Sea

Supporting Seafarers Worldwide



## Life at Sea report 2018

Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea: working together in times of crisis

Sponsored by the North of England P&I Club

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## Life at Sea: when crisis strikes

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Every year, more than 1,000 of our chaplains and volunteers in 316 ports around the world visit over 70,000 ships. It's a global network of ship-visiting on a scale unlike any other maritime organisation. Every year, we reach more than a million seafarers.

This day-in, day-out commitment means we are a reliable friend in port to seafarers everywhere. And when crisis strikes, not only are we in the right place at the right time – but, crucially, seafarers and shipping companies trust us to provide the help and support they need.

Our hope is that this report will show two things:

- 1) **Having a 'friend in port' is still vitally important for seafarers**, even in our technological age. Face-to-face contact is unique and irreplaceable, and our commitment to routine visiting can help alleviate loneliness and mental health problems in seafarers.
- 2) **We can provide practical, emotional and pastoral care to seafarers when tragedy strikes**, acting as a dependable, trusted friend in times of crisis.

By working increasingly with partners in the industry, including ship managers, owners, P&I clubs and flag states, we believe we can serve seafarers better around the world. Together, we can improve welfare through regular ship visits, and help seafarers through what may be the most difficult times of their lives.

On the following pages you'll find details about cases we've been involved in during 2017/18. These stories demonstrate the vital importance of our work – and show that, by working in partnership with you, we can all improve the lives of seafarers and fishermen around the world.

**Martin Foley**, National Director



## Hospitalisation

Seafarers endure the daily risks of an industrial workplace as well as a dangerous natural environment, and injuries sustained can be serious. For a seafarer in a foreign land, for the crew who must continue to the next port, and for family miles away, hospitalisation can be extremely lonely and stressful.

**Location:** UK

**Issue:** hospitalisation

**Date:** April 2018

An Indonesian seafarer suffered a major bleed on the brain, collapsed on board and was rushed to Southampton General Hospital's emergency department. Port chaplain Peter Morgan immediately went to visit, having been notified by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. Over the following months Peter provided vital support:

- phoned local churches to find a Javanese translator who could explain the situation to the seafarer
- visited the seafarer every day for six weeks
- contacted the Indonesian embassy in London
- contacted the P&I club
- tracked the route of the seafarer's ship and kept his crewmates updated on his progress



“If I wasn't there, he would have had no one.  
I became like his next of kin.”  
Peter Morgan, Southampton port chaplain.



## Assault and bullying

There is little documentation about assault and bullying at sea – but we know it's a reality for too many seafarers. Our independence, being neither employer, trade union, ship management or port state control, means our chaplains and ship visitors will often be the first people seafarers open up to about their problems.

**Location:** UK

**Issue:** bullying

**Date:** March 2018

We were contacted via Facebook by the nephew of a seafarer, who believed his uncle was being bullied. Our chaplain, Bryony Watson, visited the ship as soon as it called at Immingham port. She met the seafarer who was “visibly scared,” saying he had been belittled, insulted and ostracised by the chief engineer.



The seafarer made a formal complaint, and we ensured Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea chaplains visited the ship at subsequent ports. Having a strong relationship with the ship manager and owner, we worked with them to support the crew. The chief engineer was later dismissed and the atmosphere on board is much improved.

**Location:** Italy

**Issue:** assault

**Date:** March – April 2018

We received notification in London that an assault had taken place on a vessel docked in Ravenna, Italy, and a seafarer was in hospital. We alerted our port chaplain, Fr Pietro, who made contact with the seafarer. We asked our team in the Philippines to find the seafarer's sister and fly her to Italy.

A month after the incident, we helped the seafarer and his sister fly home to Manila, where they were supported by our local team.

“ Our family acknowledges your care, support and love.  
We cannot thank Stella Maris enough.”  
Sister of the assaulted seafarer



## Death at sea

The ocean is the most dangerous workplace on the planet. Death at sea is higher than ashore and suicide rates are an increasing concern. A seafarer's death is devastating for family and colleagues, and people often long for spiritual support and comfort. A priest blessing a ship or a memorial service for the lost seafarer can be an important part of the grieving process – and can help seafarers come to terms with what's happened.

- 2,000 seafarers lose their lives at sea each year from natural causes and accidents<sup>1</sup>
- 15% of deaths at sea are by suicide

**Locations:** Mauritius and South Africa

**Issue:** death on board

**Date:** March 2018

A 90,000-tonne container ship was on route to Durban, South Africa, when the Captain fell ill. Immediately, the ship diverted to Mauritius to evacuate the sick man. Tragically, he died en-route. The local Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea chaplain was called in to help with the dignified removal of the deceased from the vessel, but rough seas prevented this from happening – and the ship set off for Durban with the Captain's body on board.

Our Durban chaplain, Fr Herman, was waiting to offer support. He visited the crew, prayed with them and blessed the ship. Meanwhile, we contacted the ship management company and offered to send chaplains to support the Captain's family in Ukraine. The ship's next port of call was Port Elizabeth, and our chaplain visited the crew again to offer comfort and support.



“The crew has expressed the wish to have the Stella Maris chaplain come on board to bless the ship and provide spiritual comfort to them.”  
(email from the vessel)



## Piracy

Piracy is a terrifying experience for seafarers – and it's on the increase. The number of seafarers taken hostage rose by 62% between 2017 and 2018, and a total of 107 incidents were reported in the first half of 2018<sup>2</sup>. Piracy, and the threat of piracy, can have a lasting effect on seafarers' wellbeing and mental health. Swift intervention is essential to minimise the impact of a pirate attack, so seafarers can return to work with confidence.

In the first six months of 2018:

- 23 attempted piracy attacks
- 11 vessels were fired at
- 4 vessels hijacked
- 3 crews and their families supported by Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea worldwide

**Location:** Nigeria, Ghana and the Philippines

**Issue:** piracy

**Date:** Feb-April 2018

Following a pirate attack on a cargo vessel in the Gulf of Guinea, the P&I club contacted our London office to request help for the crew. Our chaplain went to meet the ship as it took refuge in Ghana, and brought two volunteers, both nurses specialising in mental health trauma. The crew were looked after by the local agents of the P&I club and Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea volunteers before being flown home to the Philippines.

Through coordination in London, the crew were met in Manila by representatives of the ship management company and a member of our team. The seafarers had a two-day de-brief in a local hotel before going home to spend time with their families. They were also referred to local chaplains for additional support, if needed.

The seafarers told our chaplain they felt valued and cared for by their shipping company. All of them were back at sea with the same company within three months.



“The seafarers appreciated the way the company treated them from beginning to end, and they were pleased to have Stella Maris to support them throughout. This is the real meaning of cooperation and coordination.”

Fr Paulo, Manila port chaplain

<sup>2</sup>to the IMB Piracy Reporting Centre



## Abandonment

Cases of crew abandonment are increasing<sup>3</sup> and ever more seafarers find themselves unsupported in foreign lands. Uncertainty over wages and repatriation can take years to resolve. While seafarers wait, they need vital support to live on board.

- More than 1,300 seafarers abandoned within five years<sup>4</sup>

**Location:** Aberdeen

**Issue:** abandonment and non-payment of wages

**Date:** June 2016 – January 2018

The supply boat Malaviya Seven was first detained in June 2016, then again in October, after an inspection revealed the crew had not been paid. Twenty-four seafarers were owed more than £600,000 in wages. Our port chaplain Doug Duncan stepped in with vital help, including:

- a generator, to ensure heat and electricity on board
- food parcels, toiletries and warm clothing
- transport to medical appointments and for haircuts
- days out to attractions around Aberdeen, to keep spirits up among the crew

The support provided by Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea totalled around £30,000. The ship was finally sold in late 2017, and proceeds helped cover the crew's wages. The last few seafarers flew home to India in January 2018, a year and a half after the ordeal began.



For his work supporting the crew of the Malaviya Seven, our chaplain Doug Duncan was awarded the Pride of Aberdeen and shortlisted for the Safety at Sea Unsung Hero award.

<sup>3</sup>according to the International Labour Organisation

<sup>4</sup>International Labour Organisation, during 2012-2016 there were an average 19 crew abandonments each year



## Stress and mental health problems

Seafarers suffer stress for many reasons: they are away from family, they may be worried about loved ones, and they lack quality sleep. Over a third of seafarers say they have no one to talk to on board<sup>5</sup>, and communication with home can be sporadic. The extreme temperatures, claustrophobia, and heavy seas also take their toll.

Mental health programmes have been developed to address loneliness and boredom. But often, simply talking to Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea chaplains can make all the difference, by letting seafarers know they are not forgotten.

**Location:** UK

**Issue:** coping with stress

**Date:** December 2017

A Russian cargo ship developed a significant list and lost a quantity of cargo during bad weather. After the vessel arrived in Southampton, our chaplain Roger Stone went aboard to offer support:

- took a wifi modem on board so the crew could contact family – they used it immediately
- took the chief cook shopping
- gave out Christmas cards and presents that had been provided by local school children



<sup>5</sup>The Human Element and its contribution, Dr Sanjay Bhavani, 2018, MMS Maritime (India)



## Non-payment of wages

It's hard to pinpoint the scale of this problem in the shipping industry today. Back in 2015, almost 400 reports of non-payment of wages were recorded<sup>6</sup>. We know from our experience of supporting seafarers that it remains their top concern.

**Location:** Gibraltar, Spain and UK

**Issue:** wages unpaid for four months

**Date:** March 2018

A ship's crew emailed Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea chaplain Peter Barrigan, who they knew from previous visits, to advise they were not being paid. We alerted our chaplain in the ship's next port, Santander, Spain, and he visited the crew. We also raised the issue with the manning agency in the Philippines. We continued to track the ship – our chaplain visited the crew in Gibraltar – and eventually had a message to say the debt had been settled.



“The trust which seafarers place in Stella Maris is very humbling. By visiting ships regularly, we can build strong bonds with seafarers. It means they have confidence to ask us for help anywhere in the world.”

Peter Barrigan,  
port chaplain.



## Refusal of shore leave

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Seafarers' rights to shore leave have recently been strengthened, but being refused shore leave is still a major source of stress for seafarers.

Time away from the vessel is important to break the monotony of work, and fully rest from the noise and environment of the ship. While refusal of shore leave is rare, quicker turn-around times of vessels in ports means quality time away is still difficult for many. It is for this reason that Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea chaplains and volunteers prioritise ship visiting.

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**Location:** Kenya

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**Issue:** crew imprisoned on board in poor conditions

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**Date:** Dec 2014-Aug 2017

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The ship was first detained in December 2014 after being found to be unseaworthy. The original crew were on board for several months before being repatriated. The new crew were brought in around December 2016, and were on board for eight months without leaving port. Our chaplain, George Sunguh, said, "The men were repeatedly told, 'We will sail next month,' but it never happened. They had limited drinking water and no vegetables or fruit to eat."

We supported the crew in Mombasa, and ensured our team in the Philippines provided additional help when the seafarers finally flew home in August 2017.

We work in partnership with some of the leading companies in the shipping industry.

More than half of our crisis caseload is referred to us by responsible shipowners and insurers who know their seafarers will benefit from our services.

To talk to us about partnership working, email [info@apostleshipofthesea.org.uk](mailto:info@apostleshipofthesea.org.uk) or call **020 7901 1931**.



**By partnering with Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea, you support seafarers around the world, every day and when crisis hits. Thank you so much.**

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Registered charity in Scotland number SC043085. Registered company number 3320318.