GET ON BOARD

FALL 2026

MINISTRY TO SEAFARERS

A ministry of the Christian Reformed Churches of Western Canada

401 E Waterfront Rd, Vancouver, BC V6A 4G9

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Ministry to Seafarers Vancouver

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"Every Day is Monday"

Recently, while chatting with a seafarer about the work schedule in port and on board on different days, he shared that "For us it really doesn't matter; "Every Day is Monday!" Imagine that! Occasionally they may have some holiday celebrations thrown in, but for most of their time on board, every day is a work day.

I wrestle often with how to bring some sense of variety into the lives of seafarers. Our visits are often a pleasant change for them, as we come on board without any real agenda or work-related pressures. But we're always trying to do more, especially to encourage and enable them to go ashore for a change of pace and scenery. Like the photo above, for example, from our recent celebrations for International Day of the Seafarer where we throw a party, give gifts, say prayers and sing songs, and just enjoy times of laughter, sharing and fellowship together.

Pray we can find more ways to bring joy and a sense of shared humanity into the lives of seafarers.

Summer Intern

We were blessed this summer to welcome Christian Santana as intern. Christian is from Indonesia, currently studying theology here in Vancouver. He helped us in many ways: visiting ships, transporting seafarers, helping at the seafarers' centre, etc. His Indonesian background helped him to connect especially well with the many Indonesian seafarers who work on ships. But of course, his work went much beyond that to serving seafarers from all backgrounds.

Here are some words from Christian about his experience: "My internship with Ministry to Seafarers has been a meaningful opportunity to put my theology into practice through presence, listening, and care. As an Indonesian, I especially treasured meeting Indonesian seafarers far from home. The photograph with a Sundanese chief cook captures that joy: sharing our language and cultural roots opened space for friendship and reminded me how familiar conversation can ease loneliness. Through welcoming seafarers from many backgrounds, I learned that sharing Christ's love involves both offering care and receiving the friendship, wisdom, and faith that others bring."

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Dwindling Shore Leave

A seafarer recently shared how he finally had the opportunity to leave the ship and go ashore, after several months on board. When he came to a church with a small yard around it, he kicked off his shoes and spent some time walking barefoot through the church yard. As he put it, sometimes "I just want to walk on something that is not steel."

Shore leave is deemed a right for seafarers under the internationally recognized Maritime Labour Convention (MLC). However, pressures on seafarers during their time at terminals when operations are underway can make it very difficult for them to get away. And time spent in port is becoming shorter as loading speed and efficiency increase. Seafarers' centres can be an important place for them spend time ashore and relax.

Pray for the rights of seafarers to be honoured. And pray that we chaplains would have the wisdom to know how to share true hope and the love of Christ, even when time is limited and we may have only minutes or even moments to share.

Christmas Cards & Gifts

When one ship returned to Vancouver last March, the messman shared with me his appreciation for the Christmas gift he had received here a few months earlier. He proudly told me, "I got a gift from Bob & Kathy." I was confused until he showed me the beautiful Christmas card he had received with his gift. It was signed, "Bob & Kathy." He was keeping it to take it back with him to the Philippines to show his family.

Would you or your small group or your class like to prepare Christmas cards for seafarers? See our website (ministrytoseafarers.com) under the "Get Involved" tab for more info.

We are also now preparing Christmas at Sea gifts. If you are able to donate to this cause, please send funds via e-transfer (finance@ministrytoseafarers.com) You can also send through the "Donate" button on our website (ministrytoseafarers.com), or send a cheque, payable to "Ministry to Seafarers Vancouver" to the address in the header.