



Good News Bridges Troubled Water

This finds itself in your mail because I've contacted you, or hope to visit you in the coming months.

Although I've been in ministry thirty years, the focus on bringing *good news to the world's marginalised seafarers and their families* has become a burning passion that dominates my thinking. And, behind gloomy headlines, there is **good news** out there that spurs us to do more:

Floods Envelop Manila



In October 2009, Ocean Promise came into Felixstowe. Our chaplain Ken Martin took phone cards, literature and daily papers on board. Imagine the shock when crew member Daniel Bordas saw, in the Daily Mail, a picture of his wife and daughters clinging on for dear life in *Manila's raging floodwaters*. His captain allowed an emergency phonecall home. When he came into the Seafarers' Centre, the ecumenical team supported him as he got through to his family who'd reached safety despite the devastation in their neighbourhood – **good news** indeed! It's rewarding to be there for such people at such moments. Helping contact home and caring for seafarers' families are essential elements in our international work.

Pirates of the Indian Ocean

Our chaplains worldwide regularly support those traumatised by piracy. In Ismael, Eduard Myrmyr is helping the family of Sergey Vartenkov who was shot dead by captors. What you see on the news is just the tip of the iceberg. 2009 saw 33+ ships attacked *monthly!* It's chiefly in the Indian Ocean, and Somali pirates now extend operations up to 1,000 miles. In one desperate situation, the Ukrainian crew of the Ariana was held six months. One of them survived a miscarriage on board for which she received no outside medical attention. The **good news** is that they were freed in December.



Personal Despondency



There can also be desperation caused by redundancy or breakdowns in relationship. But the deepest need of a merchant seafarer is the continual isolation from loved ones (average 9-12 months). At a church in Clacton, a British officer told me how Christmas 2009 would be his first home in 12 years — the first with his teenage daughter. I've now learnt that he's had to cover for another officer, so his optimism was misplaced!

Our chaplains reach out with the *love of Christ* in such varied circumstances. They do a great job bringing **good news** as they equip seafarers to face the future in God's hands. I'd love to visit you and share more. *A service devoted to that would be ideal, or even a midweek meeting.* This could include a stimulating PowerPoint or DVD. (You can see one if you go to *You Tube* and type *Adrian Plass Woolly Hats*.)

In the Bible, I recently noticed *Hebrews 6:10* "God isn't unjust; he won't forget your work and the love you've shown him as you've helped his people." Surely that's **good news**, a promise from God that motivates us to keep serving others in his name.

May I come to you this year, and share more **good news** of how we help the world's seafarers?

Please e-mail mwarner@sailors-society.org or telephone 07946 92 96 90

Warm regards

Mark