

The Master's Mariner

Spring 2009



**Caring for seafarers
around the world**

2010: Year of the Seafarer

The Council of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), meeting recently for its 102nd session in London, agreed that next year's theme for World Maritime Day will be '2010: Year of the Seafarer', endorsing a proposal from IMO Secretary-General Efthimios Mitropoulos.



The theme (to be celebrated throughout the year and also at a World Maritime Day parallel event in Argentina) was selected to give IMO and the international maritime community the opportunity to pay tribute to the world's seafarers for their unique contribution to society and in recognition of the risks they shoulder in the execution of their duties in an often hostile environment. In proposing it, Secretary-General Mitropoulos said that 'the unique hazards confronting the 1.5 million seafarers of the world - including pirate attacks, unwarranted detention and abandonment - coupled with the predicted looming shortage of ships' officers, make it ever more incumbent to take immediate and

effective action to forestall a situation from developing in which ships are not manned with sufficient skilled personnel'.

The theme complements IMO's ongoing "Go to Sea!" campaign to attract new entrants to the shipping industry, which was launched in November 2008 in association with the International Labour Organization, the 'Round Table' of shipping industry organizations and the International Transport Workers' Federation. It is also in line with the comprehensive review, initiated in 2006, of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) 1978 and its associated Code, updated texts of which are due to be considered by a Diplomatic Conference scheduled to be held in Manila, Philippines, in mid-2010. Once adopted, the proposed amendments to the STCW Convention and Code will provide the necessary global standards for the training and certification of seafarers to man technologically advanced ships, today and for some time to come.

As the 'parent' of MtS Sydney, the Mission to Seafarers in the UK is working closely with the IMO to ensure that the conditions of seafarers worldwide are improved as a result of government legislation, increased numbers of MtS Centres, and increased public awareness.

The Sydney Bethel Union

One of the questions I am most often asked when speaking to groups about our ministry is 'Where do you get your funding?'. As a missionary organization within the Anglican Church of Australia, most people are very surprised to learn that MtS Sydney receives no funding at all from our Diocese. This is

because we are not a Diocesan Organization, but an Anglican Organization coming under the 'umbrella' of the Australian Anglican Church, not individual Dioceses. Not that this improves our financial lot, as they don't give us any funding either!

Without the financial support of individuals such as yourselves, and organizations such as the Australian Mariners' Welfare Society (AMWS) and, most especially The Sydney Bethel Union (SBU), we would not be able to minister to the tens of thousands of seafarers who visit Sydney each year. You make our ministry possible, and for that we (and the seafarers) are immensely grateful!

So, who or what is the SBU? In short, they are material lifeblood of our ministry, and can lay claim to be the oldest ministry to seafarers in Australia.

What follows is a condensed history of the SBU – a fuller history is available from the website <http://www.sydneymbethelunion.com.au>

"The Sydney Bethel Union Society (as it was initially known) was formed in Sydney in 1822 on the initiative of the Rev William Cowper an Anglican clergyman, to provide 'religious and secular instruction and social recreation to seamen of all nations visiting the port of Sydney.'

In the early 1800s the main seaports of England were well served by numerous Christian bodies devoted to the spiritual welfare of seamen who were crewmembers aboard visiting naval and merchant vessels.

One of these organizations was known as the 'Bethel Movement' whose work initially centred around chaplains conducting services on board ships lying in the port of London and distributing religious texts to crews. ('Bethel' is a Hebrew word meaning 'House of God'.)



Later, similar activities were developed in other ports such as Liverpool and Bristol.

Significant growth meant that a formal structure was needed to co-ordinate and expand the work and in 1819, what was eventually to become known as the Bethel

Union was founded. The realisation that a shore-based mission should be established to enhance the enterprise quickly followed.

Thus the Sydney Bethel Union Society was formed in Sydney in 1822. A decade later the Committee, accepting that provision of shore-based facilities would lead to more effective ministry, was successful in obtaining from the colonial government a waterfront site for Mariners. However, the site - at the Southern end of what is now Darling Harbour - proved unsatisfactory and enactment of the *Sydney Bethel Union Trustees' Act, 1851* (NSW) authorised the Trustees of the Bethel Union to dispose of the property and seek a more appropriate location.

It says much for the zeal and commitment of the founders that the SBU was formed barely three years after the establishment of the English parent body, remembering at that stage that communication links between England and Australia were tenuous.

Five years later a grant of land on the Western side of Circular Quay (known as 'The Rocks') was formalised and a new and larger Mariners' Church was consecrated in 1859.

Extensions and refurbishment of the property in the early 1870s funded by the Sydney Bethel Union saw the addition of a hall and other



facilities. Within 10 years, total crews of ships calling at Sydney was approximately 50,000 men and by 1895, the SBU ranked second in the sailors'

institutes of the world.

In 1895, the Church of England Mission to Seamen became a Branch of the Missions to Seamen, England (formed in England in 1856) and after negotiations the Trustees of the SBU granted the Missions to Seamen a three-year renewable lease of the Mariners' Church for a nominal rental of A£1 (A\$2) per annum.

The property was renamed as the Missions to Seamen, Sydney and commenced the existing

strong link between the two organizations that survives to this day.

In the early 1970s the NSW Government resolved to encourage redevelopment of The Rocks area on the Western side of Circular Quay in which the Mission to Seamen was located. Two years later the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority resumed / purchased the property, prompting a search for alternative premises close to the waterfront so that effective ministry of the Mission could be maintained.

In 1975, the SBU purchased a building at 11-15 Macquarie Place, Sydney, which was adapted for its new role and leased to the Missions to Seamen for 25 years.

At this time rapid changes were occurring in international shipping and these had an impact on the operations of the Mission.. These included reduced crew sizes and shorter stays in ports. Port developments included the construction of container shipping facilities in the port of Botany Bay hence a forecast decline in the number of ships coming to the port of Sydney.

The search for a suitable site led the Trustees of the SBU to acquire our current home at 320-324 Sussex Street, Sydney. The Governor of NSW, Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair AC RAN (Rtd), officially named the building *Flying Angel House* on 20 June 1993.

The Sydney Bethel Union is (*most deservedly – ed*) proud of its record of nearly 190 years of continuous philanthropy which has benefited succeeding generations of seafarers of all nationalities and creeds who have passed through Sydney and neighbouring ports.”

However, despite faithful, wise stewardship, the SBU has been hit hard by the Global Financial Crisis. The consequences for MtS Sydney are significant – we are entering a very tough period in which it will be very difficult to maintain current levels of ministry to ‘our’ seafarers. Although we are doing all we can to reduce our expenses, and the willingness of the SBU and AMWS remains undiminished, it will be impossible for them to maintain previous levels of funding given the current

financial climate. We are immensely grateful to all our other supporters, be they individuals or appreciative shipping companies - is it possible for you to help us to help seafarers during these very difficult times? Every little bit helps!

2009 Mission to Seafarers’



Conference

There could be few better names for a seafarers’ haven than ‘Safety Bay’, so it was appropriate that MtS workers from Australia, New Zealand and Fiji assembled in this sleepy idyll south of Fremantle, Western Australia, from 7th-11th September for the 2009 MtS Biennial National Conference.

We were very pleased to have our new Secretary-General, The Rev. Tom Heffer, with us for the duration of the Conference. Not only was this of great benefit to the delegates, but it was also of great benefit to Tom as he continues to deepen his working knowledge of MtS Centres worldwide.

For many of the delegates, it was their first opportunity to meet chaplains and managers from the (23) Australian ports in which The Mission has a ministry presence. Therefore, the programme allowed plenty of time for people to get to know one another and to better understand the circumstances of individual MtS Centres.

However, it wasn’t all play and no work; delegates were engaged in presentations and

discussions concerning issues ranging from ‘MtS Centre Management’ to ‘Communication



and Conflict' and 'Effective Crew Visiting'. Demonstrations of effective and not-so-effective crew visiting were both entertaining and helpful. Dean Summers of the International Transport Workers Federation also spoke about the ITF's criteria when assessing Grant Applications from MtS Centres. Daily spiritual input was given by a number of Chaplains and MtS Chairman, Bp Garry Weatherill.

A feature of each Conference is the Conference Dinner and the guest speaker was Captain Allan Gray, the Harbour Master of Fremantle Ports. Allan shared with us his deep appreciation of The Mission's ministry to him during his many years at sea before taking up his present position. In an age when so many senior executives in shipping companies lack a seafaring background, and have therefore not experienced first-hand the blessings of our ministry, it was very heartening to hear such a supportive and enthusiastic voice.

A new National Council was also elected. Although we are awaiting the appointment of a second liaison bishop ('liaison' because he liaises between The Mission and the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia), the new Council members are (L-R back row first, then front row):



The Rev. Graham Miller (Townsville), Mr Adrian Willes (Brisbane), The Rev. Ian Porter (Sydney), Bishop Garry Weatherill (Chairman), Mr Colin Brown, (our Liaison & Support Officer [he liaises between the Council and the various MtS Australian Centres – we like liaising!]) and is an ex-officio member), The Rev. Tom Heffer (how could we omit our beloved Sec-Gen,!), Mr Arthur Hinsley (Hobart), The Rev. Ian McGilvray (Dampier) and Mr Dave Masters (Port Kembla).



The new Council will be busy during its two-year term as, in addition to the approval of Grant Applications and the oversight of Australia's 23 MtS Centres, we seek to initiate and develop new Centres (especially in northern Australia) and to encourage existing Centres in their ministries.

THE MISSION TO SEAFARERS, SYDNEY

ABN 59 000 652 479

Flying Angel House

320 Sussex Street Sydney NSW 2000

Postal Address: P.O. Box Q403, QVB Sydney NSW 1230

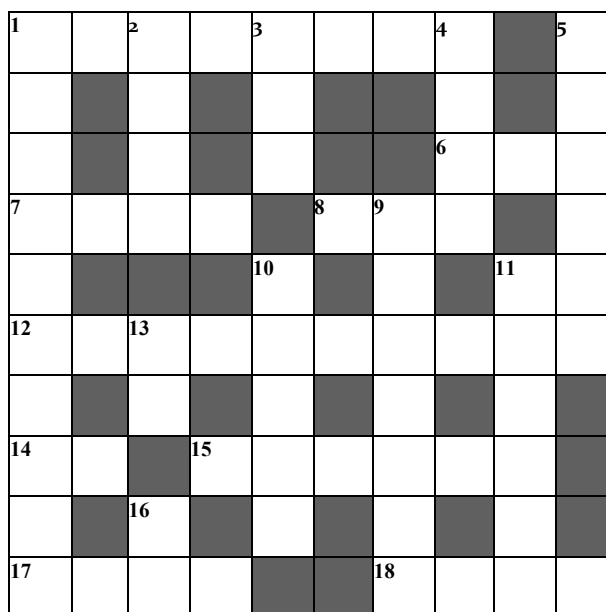
Tel: +61 (0) 2 9264 9900

Fax: +61 (0) 2 9264 9318

Email: sydney@mts.org.au

Global Website: www.missiontoseafarers.org

'Flying' Crossword



Across

1. The seafarer most likely to visit our Centre is a _.
6. An Indian's 'Cricket' phone card when it has expired.
7. A seafarer's best friend!
8. Away from the sea, it's a pool tool.
12. Chairman of MtS Australia Council.
14. Chinese Ford Falcon GT Phase III.
15. Typical tanker crew member.
17. An offer very few seafarers decline.
18. Radar to a ship or plane.

Down

1. Brotherhood.
2. Jesus is described as 'The _ of the tribe of Judah'.
3. For Chinese seafarers, 2009 is the Year of the _.
4. Woodwind derived from 'hautbois'.
5. This House of God is our chief benefactor.
9. The Beatles said their girls 'really knock me out'.
10. Second only to 1 Across in attendance.
11. None of these bombshells are Asian!
13. This seafarer must be able bodied.
16. 'Yes' to Russia's Optus.