



Caring for seafarers  
around the world

# the SEA

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Credit: Steve Sapp, CBP Office of Public Affairs

Different generations bring different  
qualities to the running of a ship

## Voice of a Generation

*How can shipping cater for a new generation of seafarers?* **By Felicity Landon**

**G**enerational differences and tensions are nothing new. So, is Generation Z a special case when it comes to seafaring? Well, according to experts, quite apart from their particular priorities and expectations of life, Gen Z have different learning styles; they have grown up in a digital world; and their experiences are often vastly at odds with the experiences of their parents and grandparents.

Raal Harris, chief creative officer of Ocean Technologies Group (OTG), which specialises in digital learning, assessment, HR and fleet management in the maritime sector, points out that the industry is never dealing with a single generation – indeed, at present there are areas where the age profile is going up – so it’s a case of handling a wide range of expectations.

“We have to work with the people

we have as well as attracting young people, so we also have to be mindful that the older population will hopefully be working in the industry for some time to come and have a lot of knowledge capital. So, we need to look at the whole cohort,” he says.

A lot of what OTG does is driven by the kind of world that Gen Z has grown up in, he says – but that isn’t exclusively about Gen Z. “For example, learning styles and attention spans are largely considered as a Gen Z concern but your and my attention span is equally lowered, for the same reasons. More broadly, we need to accept the shift in the way we like to live and work, with our lives moving more digitally. What do we need to do to keep pace with the demands and expectations of a rapidly digitalised population?”

Gen Z has been brought up in a world which is “clamouring for their attention”, he says. “Things are configured and put forward to them in a way that they like. They are being asked their opinion on everything. So what happens when you put them into a traditional workplace with a command and control structure?”

The ‘why do it?’, ‘because I say so’ exchange could become tricky. “These are people who expect to know everything about the strategy, and why and how a decision is made. They have that sense of entitlement, rightly or wrongly, to be involved and consulted. However, our industry certainly isn’t designed like that. You can’t have people saying ‘I don’t think we should go to the muster points’.”

The younger generation has been brought up with the idea that everyone

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should be an individual, while the industry is purposely avoiding that concept; everything is based on rank and on people knowing their place clearly, he says. Harris believes a safe, efficient ship is not about individuals, but more about replaceable cogs in a very well-run machine: “The new generation doesn’t want to work or think like that but we are not in a position to change it entirely.”

### More support needed

What can be done? Harris says shipping needs to become more supportive. “It is really important that the leadership teams have the requisite soft skills to adapt their leadership styles and maybe chamfer off the edges when it comes to how they talk to people. Just as we have had to work at having different nationalities, cultures and religions working together, the same applies to the intergenerational situation – they see things in a different way.”



Raal Harris, Ocean Technologies Group

There are interesting angles here. Previous generations often had a hard time at school, being bullied by other children and even by the teachers. The upshot of ‘going through the mill’, however undesirable society would see this as today, is that you generally become very resilient, says Harris. “However, if you have an education system which prepares you to be consulted, involved and no one loses, it can be challenging when you find yourself in the real world.

“There are good things that will come out of all this. If you have different perspectives, you have better decisions. The generational shift may lead to positive behaviour in terms of safety, too – Gen Z are less afraid to challenge a decision about the well-being of the vessel, environment or people.”

Generation Z are used to searching through material and finding their own information, and that should prompt a move to more self-learning. This, he says, is a generation that will ask ‘Why’. In training, therefore, it’s important to explain why they are being asked to do a particular course and make clear the benefits to them as an individual.

Even more important, says Harris, is that young people know what they are expected to achieve, and that their goals are aligned with the company.

### Change of perspective

Maritime workplace and well-being coach (and former seafarer) Tineke Zoet tackled the issue of bridging generational gaps in the maritime work-

place during a recent presentation to InterManager members. She says that bringing the generations together is “more about changing your perspective than your opinions”.

It’s important to recognise that older generations went through a childhood with certain political and social climates, raised by another different generation. “My parents were hierarchical, my father came from parents who had suffered war trauma,” she says. “We learned – have a steady job, don’t complain, build up your savings, go through your career – and that was the measurement of success. That fear came from our parents. However, 20-year-olds, at least in the West, are living in a bubble where ‘everything is possible’.

“They have access to the internet worldwide and, they can compare themselves to anybody they like, they can go to any school, there are more possibilities, but the younger generation have different stressors. There is so much choice that they are almost going into procrastination, and developing mental health issues.”

Essentially, human beings don’t change and most come with the same fears and insecurities even if they ‘unwrap them’ differently, says Zoet, but every generation has something to pass on, every generation will come up with something that their parents won’t be happy with and every generation sees the world in a different way. “You have to see the wonderful things that this younger generation will bring in. They have their own ways, they see how we messed up

the environment, you see youngsters going into this movement and many following.

“They are saying ‘our parents messed up, we are going to do it differently’. They see people burn out at work at the age of 40 and ask – is this it, really it? They feel there must be more to life, and they know there is more.”

How this translates into life and careers at sea is interesting. Zoet started her career as an officer with the Dutch Merchant Navy in 1999 and spent several years working on cargo ships. It was, she recalls, a ‘very lonely existence’.

“Younger generations don’t want to go through the ranks like we did. They don’t want to work 9 to 5, especially at sea – they can get better conditions and work elsewhere. They have different ideas about how the work-life balance should be. The worry is that there is going to be a huge gap in senior captains in the future. How do we keep the younger generation at sea long enough for them to be trained well enough?”

### Work-life questions

Can an industry thrive where the new generation see work-life balance as more important than the job itself?

“Previous generations went to sea for six months or even a year at a time and nobody questioned it,” says Zoet. “Now people want better leave systems.”

Connectivity is vital – “no one wants to be at sea for six months without Instagram”, she says. “There are fewer and fewer crew on board so there is more work to be done and long hours. It is going to be lonely, so you do want to have wi-fi. The younger generation want better rest hours. That means a complete shift in how you work and operate – which is not a bad thing, because sleep deprivation is still a major factor in human error leading to accidents.”

Ship owners and managers have been shifting their attitudes fast. Mental health ‘didn’t figure at all’ a few years ago; today, there is a growing focus on mental health, well-being and the human element.

If shipping remains old-fashioned in many ways, the younger generation are perfectly placed to push the industry forward in the 21st century, with their inbuilt understanding of digital tech.

“The younger generation bring huge opportunities and new ideas. The older

*“The generational shift may lead to positive behaviour in terms of safety, too – Gen Z are less afraid to challenge a decision about the well-being of the vessel, environment or people.”*

generation may think ‘we have always done it this way and it works, so why change a system?’ – but they should be careful. The younger generation brings fantastic research and knowledge and new abilities and tech that many of us can’t even comprehend.

However, she warns, just because every generation brings its own ideas and evolution, this does not mean that everyone in Gen Z has the same aspirations or attitudes. “Your life filters are different to those of the person standing right next to you.” Everyone has to understand that others don’t all think the same way as them. Finding common ground, focusing on conflict resolution, are key, says Zoet.

### More demanding?

Yrhen Bernard Sabanal Balinis, a seafarer in his mid-20s, journalist, International Maritime Organization (IMO) Goodwill Maritime Ambassador, and also part of the UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (UNDOALOS) Pool of Experts, focusing on maritime transport, agrees that there is resistance from young people when they are told ‘what to do and what not to do’.

“The more experienced seafarers are telling us that we are becoming more demanding. This may not come as a surprise, but it is because we have as a generation more opportunities, more avenues career-wise,” he says. “The younger generation are asking why so much emphasis is put on money, when they are more impact driven. There is a shift from accruing money to making a lasting impact on the planet, making it more sustainable for their children’s children.”

While globalisation has opened up more opportunities, many seafarers feel they have less support from their employers, says Balinis. “As digitalisation comes, inevitably there will be fewer people on board – and that means there will be more work divided among the crew, but there is not much increase in wages or support.”

He says the problem is not so much about attracting youngsters to go to sea – it’s keeping them engaged and on board from that point.


Young people appreciate getting involved in other activities, such as the INC-4 plastics pollution campaign, including marine plastics, says Balinis.

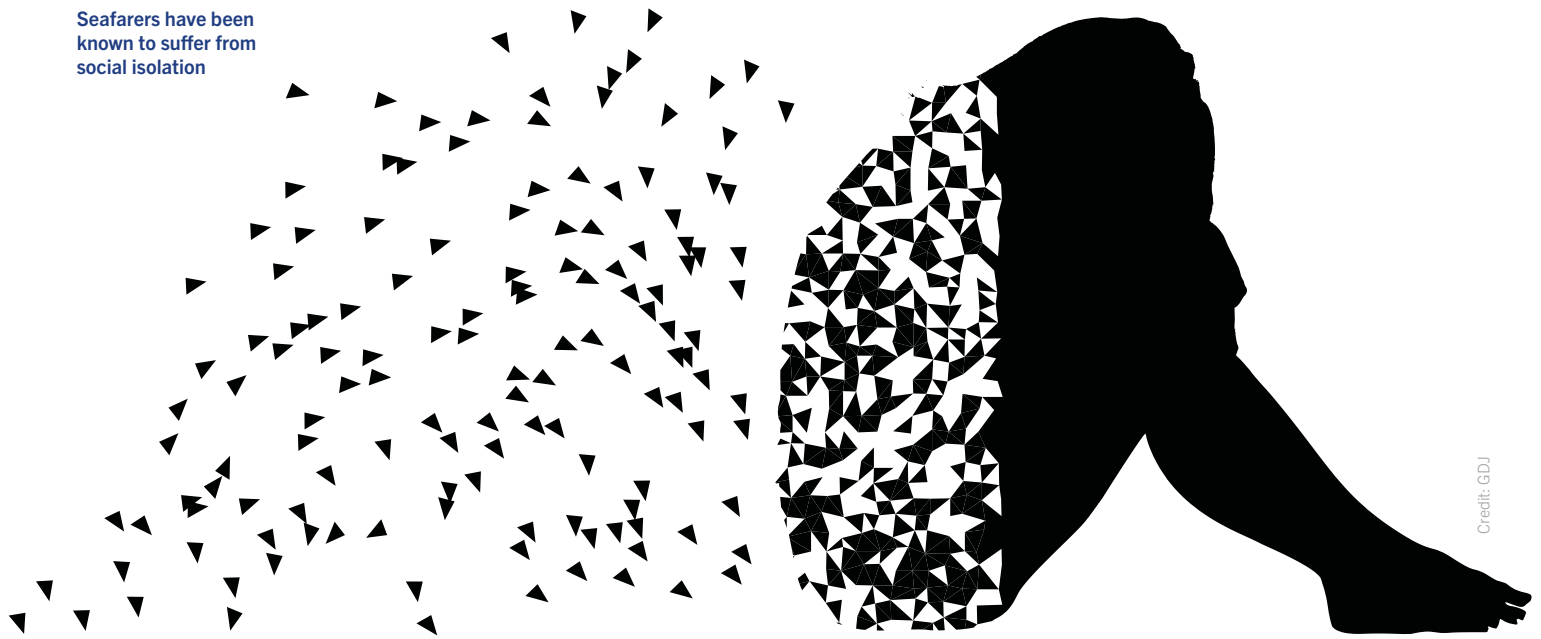
### Engagement possibilities

Shipping companies can take steps to keep their younger seafarers engaged – for example, through onboard internet connection, the opportunity to change a policy implementation in the SMS, or the possibility of career transition in an office.

There is no definitive solution and much of his own campaigning work is trial and error. “That includes civic engagement, hosting roundtable discussions, and localised SDG seminars that will feed into some UN processes. The rationale is for them to realise there is more to maritime than seafaring.

“We also can’t overlook the family’s conception or misconception of how younger seafarers view the industry. On a panel at a recent forum, I was asked if I would encourage or inspire my children to be seafarers. My answer: it’s a false dichotomy, if I’d answered no, I would be viewed as a hypocrite who wouldn’t expose my kin to hardships yet go around saying how wonderful maritime is. If I said yes, people would still think I am a hypocrite or naïve. Perhaps the better question we have to ask is that, as parents, are we selfish enough to deprive our children of the opportunity to choose for themselves?”

Finally, he acknowledges: “We are not without blame. Youth have become more demanding indeed. But perhaps it’s because the things that the previous generation blindly followed and accepted as a norm, we are now questioning and shaking. Work-life balance and mental health – which were virtually fantasies before – have now become a focus for the younger generation in general, not only seafarers.” 



Credit: GDJ

## Deep dive on seafarer well-being

*Study to track trends and showcase best practice on diversity and inclusion*

By Heidi Heseltine

The Diversity Study Group (DSG), an expert in maritime diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB), has launched a seafarer DEIB data gathering and benchmarking initiative in response to concerns across the industry regarding our ability to attract and retain seafarers and ensure that we are providing everyone with a physically and psychologically safe working culture and environment.

Ship operators Anglo-Eastern Ship Management, Ardmore Shipping and Dorian LPG are founding members to the project, which is supported by The Mission to Seafarers, Sailors Society and ISWAN.

The initiative tracks crew member demographics as well as data relating to psychological and physical safety and well-being, enabling members to take a granular look at the successes and challenges of onboard DEIB programmes while accounting for the unique constraints of a diverse global workforce at sea. Year-on-year tracking will identify emerging trends, successful outcomes and ongoing challenges, showcase best practice, and allows DSG to employ its expertise to strengthen supportive working cultures.

The project has been designed to help address some widely recognised challenges in the industry. These include the acknowledged problem with seafarers leaving the industry

post-Covid and a lack of new talent coming in. It is estimated that about 1.9 million seafarers currently serve the world merchant fleet, operating over 74,000 vessels around the globe and there is a predicted shortfall of about 90,000 officers by 2026.

Furthermore, reports undertaken among the seafaring community also cite ineffective shipboard leadership, social isolation, power abuse on board, inappropriate behaviour and a lack of equity in relation to development opportunities and financial remuneration as having a negative impact on working life at sea. One study of the seafaring community (Bullying and Harassment in the Danish Merchant Fleet) found that 17% of respondents reported exposure to bullying and stated: “The number and scope of reported cases of threats of violence, bullying and harassment makes it unlikely that the issue merely covers individual people, individual shipping companies, or individual segments of the sector... results describe a broadly rooted culture of bullying, with an adverse impact on the mental health of many seafarers”. All of these issues are likely to be contributing factors to a declining seafarer population.

### Global problem

While data in the maritime sector remains limited, we can gain further insights into what seafarers might be experiencing when we consider global

statistics for those in employment. It was reported by the ILO in 2021 that, across the world, 22.8% or 743 million persons in employment had experienced psychological, physical or sexual harassment and/or assault at work, women being only slightly more likely than men to have experienced it (by 0.8 percentage points).

As the data gathered for the seafarer DEIB initiative will be gathered anonymously through DSG as a third party, this will provide people with a safe space in which to speak up. This data will play a vital role in equipping organisations and the industry with the statistics to support long term change and development. The DSG has been successfully running a similar initiative for shore-based employees within the global maritime sector for over 5 years.

The aim of the collaboration between DSG and The Mission to Seafarers, in addition to other charities supporting the initiative, will be to raise further awareness on key issues arising from the data and to consider the actions needed to address them, be these at an industry or organisational level. The ultimate ambition of everyone involved is to provide our seafarers with a physically and psychologically safe working environment where everyone can be themselves and has equal opportunity to thrive. 🌐

For further information, reach out to DSG via email: [info@diversitystudygroup.com](mailto:info@diversitystudygroup.com).

# Share your health experiences

*Vital new research on seafarers' health seeks participants*

By Nelson Turgo

**D**uring the pandemic, some working seafarers suffered health problems but were banned by port authorities and immigration officers from seeking treatment ashore. This unacceptable situation served to highlight the challenges seafarers sometimes face in gaining access to necessary medical treatment while at sea and also in protecting their own health.

To address the difficulties faced by seafarers we first need to produce evidence of the situations that they face. For this reason, the Seafarers International Research Centre at Cardiff University is seeking the participation of seafarers working on cargo and cruise ships in a new study of seafarers' health and their access to healthcare while on board. The study is being funded by The Swedish Mercantile Marine Foundation.

Are you an active seafarer who is able to spare some time to complete an online questionnaire or take part in an internet-based (e.g. Zoom or similar) interview about your health and experiences of healthcare on board a cruise, cargo or other offshore working vessel? Would you be willing to share your stories with us on an anonymous and confidential basis? If so, could you please take a moment to visit our webpage which provides further details about the study and links to the questionnaires: <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/seafarers-international-research-centre>.

All the research staff have spent time on board working vessels and have experienced for themselves the

remoteness of a seafarer's life and the barriers that exist for some seafarers in getting medical care and in protecting their health. That is why we really care about this issue. We hope that our research will highlight what needs to be improved and how, and will motivate the relevant parties to address the needs of seafarers as a matter of urgency.

The research is being organised by Professor Helen Sampson at the Seafarers International Research Centre in the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University. Please take part if you can and spread the word about the study to other active seafarers as well. We know we can make a difference, but we also know that we cannot do it without you! 📧

## Red flags for Indian seafarers

German maritime specialist Mental Health Support Solutions (MHSS) has noted more Indian seafarers getting in touch about their well-being, *Tradewinds* reports.

MHSS said it is “deeply concerned” at the levels of loneliness and isolation experienced by these seafarers. This is particularly a problem on ships where cultural differences are prevalent.

Clinical psychologist Julia Oppermann told *Tradewinds*: “We have seen a significant increase in calls from Indian seafarers and office staff, particularly where cultural disparities have not been appropriately considered and there is an absence of a supportive environment that respects their cultural norms.”

While these issues might have always been a problem for Indian nationals, MHSS says that the escalating attacks in the Red Sea may have exacerbated them.

A lack or complete absence of communal dining on ships could be adding to the feelings of disconnection and emotional distress among Indian seafarers, Oppermann added. “Eating together and sharing meals are deeply ingrained cultural practices in Indian society. When seafarers are unable to participate in these traditions, it can further contribute to their sense of isolation,” she said. *Nelson Turgo is a research associate at SIRC. S*



Some Indian seafarers are being impacted by cultural differences on board

# Prioritising seafarers' experience in fuel efficiency

*Stolt Tankers promotes 'unconscious' fuel-saving behaviour on board*

By Harriet Hunnisett-Johnson

In September 2023, shipping company Stolt Tankers launched a new project designed to tackle a common challenge with fuel efficiency initiatives: how to achieve fuel savings and reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions without burdening seafarers with extra tasks?

It may seem counterintuitive – impossible even – for Stolt Tankers to expect to see significant fuel savings without changing the processes and tasks crew members undertake on board. But by working with behaviour change service Signol, the company pioneered a new approach which prioritised seafarers' experience using sophisticated Internet of Things (IoT) data already collected on board.

The idea is simple: with the right information, support and feedback, crew members can almost unconsciously perform their usual day-to-day tasks in more fuel-efficient ways. In practice, it's more complex, since 'the right' support requires a deep understanding of the context in which seafarers make decisions, and the ability to engage seafarers directly without adding pressure or micromanaging.

As a former seafarer myself, I know that the more we can reduce pressure and workload (particularly admin and reporting tasks) for crew members, the more opportunity we unlock to improve operational efficiency. This has long informed our thinking at Signol as we've rolled out previous initiatives at companies such as Cargill, Ridgebury Tankers and BSM.

By combining our own maritime expertise, behavioural science and existing processes and data on board these ships, we've been able to design a solution which 'nudges' seafarers to shift their operational behaviour wherever possible to save fuel and reduce emissions.

This enables seafarers to be passive participants in fuel efficiency initiatives; simply by reading an email (albeit one which has been carefully designed and contains crucial insights and feedback), crew members are playing their part in the initiative and are more likely to build up fuel-efficient behaviours.

In fact, previous projects have tended to reduce fuel consumption by 5-12%: an impressive amount considering this is achieved without new hardware implementation or new processes on board.

With Stolt Tankers, there was an additional way in which the project enabled seafarers to make this impact passively; the project broke new ground by harnessing the power of continuous monitoring data automatically collected through sensors on board.

## Direct connection

Five of Stolt's vessels are IoT-enabled and collect insights continuously and automatically through sensors connected directly into the ship's power management and automation systems. This provides a comprehensive view of what the crew experiences on board.

Stolt's IoT data reduced the manual input required by eliminating any extra data entry when measuring fuel efficiency. The IoT data also included

a wider range of data points than noon reports and so provided better insights on the factors affecting whether or not crew members were able to implement emissions-reducing behaviours. This ensured that the measurements of individual crew members' performance were fair, since they accounted for the wider context of the operational and external environment.

This depth of insights helped seafarers understand the impact of their actions on overall fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and easily see their progress, without needing to spend time trawling through masses of data.

As a result, crew members were enthusiastic about the fuel-saving initiative and saw it as a tool which supported and encouraged their efforts, rather than burdened them with tasks or pressure.

A crew member interviewed during the six-month project said: "It's nice to see we are contributing and helping [the ship to] perform better and better. It's a good, encouraging program."

The enthusiasm and positivity about fuel savings was further supported due to Stolt's decision to 'reward' each goal achieved with a charity donation.

Our project with Stolt shows that fuel efficiency initiatives don't have to feel like a battle between management who care about the bottom line, and crew members who just want to get on with their daily work. It's possible for fuel efficiency and decarbonisation to feel positive and engaging, and even improve the day-to-day experience of seafarers on board. 📍

*Harriet Hunnisett-Johnson is head of maritime at Signol.*



Stolt Tankers offers charity rewards for achieving goals

# Protection against risk of detention

*Insurance helps to safeguard seafarers' legal and human rights*



Shoreline's insurance provides specific cover for US detentions

Credit: Port of Los Angeles

## By Captain Thomas Brown

In the maritime industry today, the increasing spectre of seafarer criminalisation looms large. The rigorous enforcement of international conventions like MARPOL has inadvertently led to a legal landscape where seafarers can find themselves at the risk of detention in the US often due to actions of others beyond their control.

The plight of seafarers detained in the US is a pressing concern. Without adequate support, they face the risk of prolonged detention, separated from family, and subjected to legal uncertainty. Shoreline has created MARPOL Detention Costs Insurance (MDCI) as a critical tool in the fight to safeguard seafarers' legal and human rights as well as their mental and physical well-being.

MDCI covers essential needs such as wages, accommodation, living expenses, personal legal representation, and repatriation costs. It is not merely a financial protection; it represents a lifeline that sustains seafarers through the ordeal of detention, striving to reduce the time they spend away from work and their normal family lives.

MDCI also embodies strong Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles within the maritime industry. Recognising the risk of seafarer detention as an inherent risk of maritime trade to the US, it is

incumbent upon seafarer employers to adopt proactive risk management practices to mitigate the impact of this known risk upon their employees. MDCI exemplifies positive risk management, ensuring the rights and welfare of seafarers are prioritised and protected.

Shipowners bear the cost of MDCI, which reflects their commitment to safeguarding their crew's professional interests and human rights. This insurance product is a testament to the value placed on human capital in the maritime industry, aligning with broader ESG objectives to foster sustainable and ethical employment practices.

## Knowledge is power

Seafarers, aware of the risks associated with their profession, should be informed about the protections available to them. They have the right to inquire if their employers have secured insurance such as MDCI, which not only serves as a protective measure but is also a reflection of the employer's dedication to safeguarding their professional and personal well-being.

In focusing on our seafarers' rights and liberties, MDCI is a critical component of ethical and responsible maritime employment protection. It acknowledges the unique vulnerabilities faced by seafarers and offers a tangible solution to mitigate the impact of their possible detention in the US.

We believe MDCI is more than just a financial safeguard; it is a commitment to the humane treatment and rights of seafarers, encapsulating the essence of ESG principles in maritime risk management.

Through the purchase of MDCI, shipowners demonstrate their acknowledgment of the risks faced by their crew and acknowledge their resolve to mitigate these seagoing employment risks, ensuring that their crews are provided with a safe place of work in an ever-changing world of regulatory compliance and legal enforcement. 🌐

Captain Thomas Brown is CEO of Shoreline Ltd. For more information on MDCI visit: <https://www.shoreline.bm/solutions/marpol-detention-costs-insurance/>.

*“Seafarers, aware of the risks associated with their profession, should be informed about the protections available to them”*

# Learning from Generation Z

*Fresh thinking and new voices are needed to move the industry forward*

By Michael Grey

Seafarers are no different from people ashore and every generation will be critical of those who come after them. We thought we were terribly hard done by in our level of pay and the fact that we signed two-year articles. Our seniors, however, told us that we “had never had it so good” and were fond of telling us about their hard-lying ships, derisory wages, and harsh conditions. My uncle only ever got back to the UK every four years. We just didn’t know how lucky we were, they would emphasise, as they criticised our casual way of doing things.

Thus, it goes on, with successive generations of seafarers, the latest being Generation Z, seeming to have come in for more criticism than most for their reluctance to blindly put up with what their predecessors cheerfully (or blindly) accepted. They, like their shore-side compatriots, have certain characteristics in common. They are more reluctant to accept at face value what they are being told and are quite likely to question or challenge something they think is simply stupid. The litany of “we have always done it that way” will cut little ice with younger people, who can often see a better solution.

They are ambitious and generally unwilling to sit around year after year doing the same job, looking quite openly for promotion and advancement. They are less impressed with companies where seniority is the sole criteria for promotion and will be more likely to move on if they see better opportunities and greener grass elsewhere. And with the facility of the Internet, they will be well equipped to source any opportunities. If an employer wants to retain good people, the job must remain attractive for this more mobile and questing workforce.

## Digital age

We might argue that this generation is uniquely different to all those which have gone before in that it is composed of people who have grown up

Younger seafarers are well equipped to make the most of technology on board ships



in an age of digital technology and have capabilities that would have been barely comprehended even twenty years ago. Older folk have had to painfully learn this stuff, which Gen Z has imbibed practically from their cradles. Properly trained by decent maritime education systems, they are thus very well equipped to make the most of the technology aboard ship, using it to the best of its advantage.

You must hope that clever people from this generation are employed fully in contributing to the revision of the STCW Convention and other important regulatory changes, as they will be very influential in ensuring that what results is fully relevant for future shipping. They need to be listened to, as their ideas will surely be different to those of their elders and should not be ignored.

At a time of profound technical change, the freshest minds are needed to build in technical relevance.

We might also suggest that a

generation which is more likely to question established methodology could be well equipped to challenge issues right across the maritime industry, from inadequate design to operational practices that really are ‘past their sell-by date’. And if the ‘establishment’ fails to budge on these changes, this generation will simply not tolerate their continuation and will seek employment elsewhere. As examples, we might think of the inherent hazards and long-term health aspects of prolonged six-hour watches on lean-manned small ships, the inability of present regimes to materially reduce the incidence of enclosed space tragedies, lifeboat casualties, or the frantic pace of modern ship operations.

And bolder, questioning younger officers might eventually suggest that reform of the curious and complex system of ownership and ship registration, right across their industry, is long overdue. 🌐

*“At a time of profound technical change, the freshest minds are needed to build in technical relevance”*



# Recruitment in the digital age

*Enhancing global hiring and empowering seafarers' career choices*

By Isabelle Rickmers

The maritime sector has undergone a significant transformation driven by digital innovation, as evidenced by the thriving maritime startup scene. One such startup is TURTLE, a pioneering maritime recruitment platform that streamlines the hiring process and improves global connectivity between shipping companies and seafarers. As digital technologies continue to advance, platforms such as this are becoming essential to the future of maritime recruitment.

TURTLE leverages data and AI to transform recruitment. By utilising the interactions of its users, the platform becomes more valuable with each new participant, illustrating powerful network effects. Our approach addresses hiring inefficiencies, connects global talent more effectively, and enhances regulatory compliance.

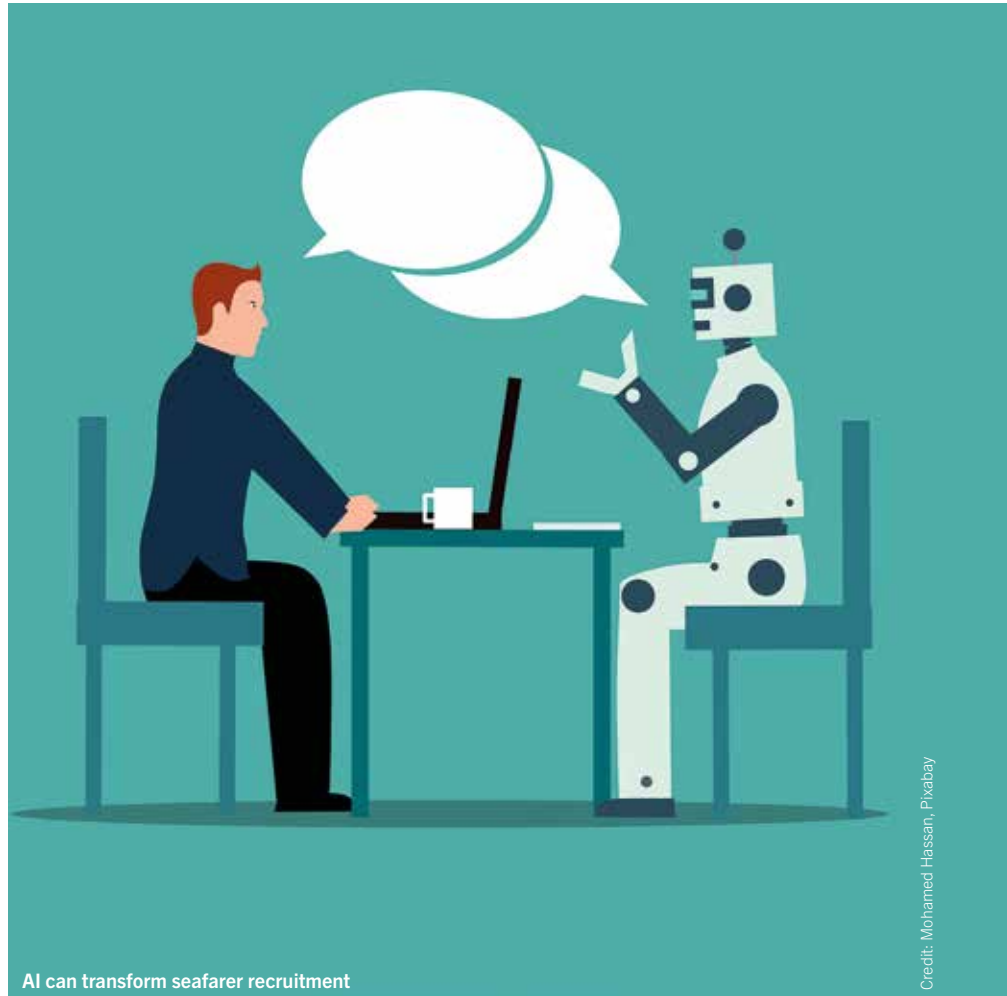
In addition, the platform supports greater diversity in the maritime industry by facilitating outreach to underrepresented groups and nationalities, which is crucial as the sector works towards a more balanced representation of genders and cultures on board ships. The platform also mitigates the risks of regional or global disruption such as the Covid-19 pandemic. The shift to digital recruitment speeds up the hiring process and widens the scope for finding the best candidates quickly.

## Empowerment of seafarers

For seafarers, using TURTLE means self-determination and the certainty that their sensitive data is protected. It also closes compliance gaps and lowers the barriers to entry into the industry. A digital career planning tool enables continuous career planning and assignment management, regardless of geographical location, and is therefore a key benefit for seafarers.

In addition, it offers online mentoring programs that are extremely valuable in guiding younger seafarers through the complexities of maritime careers and helping them climb the career ladder with easily accessible expert advice.

The digitalisation of maritime recruitment increases transparency and promotes ethical practices. Data-driven recruitment processes help to reduce the




*“The digitalisation of maritime recruitment increases transparency and promotes ethical practices”*

risk of corrupt practices such as illegal recruitment fees – costs which should be borne by companies not by seafarers as per the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006. Through our platform, seafarers can report and review their recruitment experiences, fostering an environment of accountability and trust. Access to salary benchmarks and contract standards also helps seafarers make informed decisions, ensure fair employment practices, and promote a culture of transparency and equity.

The benefits of implementing a digital recruitment tool are particularly evident after a short transition period from traditional processes to an independent search. These include better hiring metrics

like time to hire, driving efficiency, easier candidate assessment, and better access to global talent.

TURTLE plans to further expand its digital services to keep pace with technological advances and the new demands of the industry. The focus will continue to be on supporting seafarers and providing shipping companies with tools, data insights, and employer branding support to effectively manage their recruitment needs.

As part of our mission, TURTLE will continue to support vital industry initiatives designed to tackle illegal recruitment practices.  Isabelle Rickmers is CEO and founder of TURTLE.



Credit: Houston International Seafarers' Center

## Reaching out to US partners

*The Mission is proud to support the Houston and Point Comfort seafarers centres* **By Verity Relph**

**H**ow to ensure that as many seafarers as possible have access to port welfare services? Data from the Seafarers Happiness Index suggests that there are many who do not have sufficient access to welfare facilities ashore. In part, this is down to barriers such as shore leave restrictions, but there are also ports around the world where welfare support and facilities are limited or simply do not exist.

Reaching more seafarers across all vessel types is a key feature of the Mission to Seafarers' (MtS) current strategic plan, and one region of focus has been the US.

MtS has enjoyed a relationship with several American stations over the years, but its main connections are with Baltimore on the East Coast and Seattle on the West. With many ports in the US serviced by relatively small, independent welfare groups, MtS has been working to establish new partnerships in several ports with a view to enhancing welfare services for visiting crews.

The ever-expanding Port of Houston is one of the largest in the US and covers around 52 miles of waterway. It includes

eight public terminals and is ranked the 10th largest container port in the world. The port is served by the ecumenical Houston International Seafarers' Center (HISC), which has been operating since 1963.

Since October 2023, MtS has been providing a chaplain to provide pastoral care and practical assistance to seafarers visiting the port, adding to the services already provided by HISC.

The Revd Thomas Morrow has perhaps one of the most extraordinary backgrounds of all MtS chaplains. Prior to joining MtS, Thomas lived with his family in Zambia where he ran a successful orphanage.

Though incredibly humble, he recognises how his experiences enrich his role as port chaplain. "My extensive experiences living in over 20 countries around the world and learning many of their customs, cultures, and languages have given me a unique ability to connect with the diverse group of foreign sailors I encounter," he says. "These life experiences allow me to relate to them on a personal level and offer support and understanding.

"Additionally, raising my six children in a village in Zambia has provided me with a profound understanding of the challenges families in developing countries face," he adds.

Having a strong port chaplaincy presence in Houston means seafarers spending long periods away from their families have access to a friendly face and listening ear, and stress and mental health support if they need it. They also have access to practical assistance, such as transportation, internet and language translation services. Thomas adds that it is also about "finding a sense of community and companionship" while they are in port.

### Improving well-being

"Overall, a port chaplaincy presence in Houston is crucial for the well-being of seafarers visiting the port," says Thomas. "It enhances their quality of life, provides essential support, and helps them navigate the challenges they may face during their time at the port."

One recent incident that vividly illustrates the importance of a chaplaincy presence is that of a container ship that encountered disaster at the start of the year. While refuelling, the vessel had caught fire, causing the deaths of two crew members and leaving one with burns and severe lung damage.

*"Being able to offer seafarers that respite is an amazing opportunity"*

On hearing the news, Thomas went immediately to the terminal, where he provided pastoral support to the Russian, Ukrainian and Tanzanian crew, who were in a state of shock. Over the next several days, Thomas continued to visit the crew, accompanying them to Walmart to buy essentials and supporting them in the aftermath of the incident. He continues to visit the Tanzanian seafarer who was badly hurt in the fire and is still recovering in hospital. After many weeks, he is making good progress and is finally able to speak and walk again. It is the ongoing support and also the small gestures, such as gifting the seafarer a Texas baseball cap, which make a difference.

Some 100 miles west of Houston is another port where MtS has formed another new partnership.

Point Comfort is a chemical port on Lavaca Bay in Texas. The ecumenical ministry team provide a range of services, including ship visiting, transportation, shopping and a special ‘Christmas at Sea’ programme, taking gifts from the local community on board during the festive season. They first began ship visiting in 2019, but a seafarers’ centre in the port had been a long hoped for dream.

Rhonda Cummins, president of the Point Comfort Seafarers Center, and fellow board member Tom Wise took on the mighty task of effectively building the new centre themselves. They spent many months measuring, painting, and doing all manner of construction work with donated materials.

The new centre, made up of two small buildings joined together, was opened in May 2023. It is located inside the secured port area, meaning seafarers can easily walk there from their vessels.

Open 24 hours seven days a week, the centre gives crew space for rest and relaxation. They have access to free Wi-Fi, books, TV, a pool table, refreshments and a chapel.

### Making an impact

The response to the new centre has been fantastic: “The centre is being used at all hours of the day and night as crew members are off duty,” says Rhonda. “Most visitors are signing the guest-book and many leave comments. One of the best said our ‘centre was petit but complete’. Some of the guys send notes of thanks through Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and email. We have even had notes and photos left in the centre for us to find.



A warm welcome awaits at the Point Comfort Seafarers Center

“I have been told that it means the world to them. Having a place off the ship where they can relax, communicate with their families, update computer software, activate devices (all on the free internet), enjoy basketball and billiards or take a quiet moment in the chapel area is critical for their well-being. Being able to offer them that respite is an amazing opportunity.”

Rhonda knows only too well how challenging a life at sea can be. “I used to work on boats and was away from home when good and bad things happened,” she comments. “I have taken my memories of the loneliness and isolation along with ones of strangers that helped me along the way to guide my efforts. It is important to let our seafarers know they are not forgotten or alone. We try to make them feel welcome in port, sharing smiles and friendly conversation.”

The team in Point Comfort are

indefatigable, with further additions to the centre still underway. “Smaller details are coming together,” says Rhonda, “including our outdoor basketball court, other outdoor games and hopefully a herb garden. A snack vending machine is coming soon and we will learn what items the seafarers want us to stock.”

The new centre has increased their visibility in the port, helping to expand their team of volunteers and educate the extended community about the port and seafarers. But above all, it is a place where seafarers can relax and recuperate away from ship.

“It is very meaningful to have a presence here,” says Rhonda. “Because the port is small, it allows for more personal attention. With returning ships we are able to build friendships and learn from each other.”

*Verity Relfh is the grants and impact manager at The Mission to Seafarers.*



Downtime at the Point Comfort Seafarers Center

# From perilous climb to global advocacy

*A pilot's journey towards safer ship transfers* By Carly Fields

**A** lifelong love for the water, encompassing everything from swimming to sailing, naturally propelled Ewan Rattray towards a maritime career. Growing up near the sea and being surrounded by people with water-based jobs, Ewan was attracted by the freedom of a sea-based career, and ready to travel the world with it.

Having first gone to sea when he was 17, Ewan has today been in the maritime industry for more than 20 years. He worked on ships sailing around the world for 16 years before taking up a job in Aberdeen as a harbour pilot, guiding vessels safely in and out of the busy port.

Throughout his career, he has found he has had to balance the highs with lows. He recalls during his time as a Navigation Officer receiving a large pack of paper chart and publications corrections in the ship's mail after a few weeks at sea. "I feel this will resonate with a lot of people," he told *The Sea*.

On the positive side, the thrill of ship handling and the collaborative spirit of the bridge team during pilotage offered him immense satisfaction. "There is something very satisfying integrating into a bridge team and helping the Master and crew safely navigate into port," he says.

However, his time at sea was cruelly cut short after an incident in 2018 involving an unsafe pilot transfer. During a routine transfer, the absence of proper handholds resulted in a serious injury. "I boarded a cargo ship underway which unfortunately didn't have any stanchions," he says. "This was unknown to me at the time of boarding, and it was only as I tried to climb higher, I realised I didn't have anything to hold on to.

"In that split second of thinking what to do next the pilot cutter rose up and crushed my leg between the ship and the boat's fender. Looking back, I am incredibly fortunate to be alive."

*"Something quickly stuck out to me: an attitude towards the pilots, and organisations, who were advocating for safer pilot transfers"*



Ewan Rattray

## Safety first

This harrowing experience highlighted to Ewan just how broad and far reaching the issue of safe access for pilots was in the industry. "There are so many avenues that feed into a pilot transfer ranging from vessel design to safety culture and crew training," he says.

These realisations ignited a passionate pursuit to improve pilot transfer safety. "Not long after my accident, I began speaking to industry professionals regarding pilot transfers," he says. "Something quickly stuck out to me: an attitude towards the pilots, and organisations, who were advocating for safer pilot transfers. I quickly felt that their views were being cast aside owing to a label that pilots just moan and complain."

Refusing to be silenced, Ewan embarked on a mission to gather data from pilots around the world. This data, coupled with in-depth academic research, would provide irrefutable evidence for the need for change. "All

I did really was gather and analyse data using an approved and accepted methodology; it was all of the pilots and pilot organisations around the world who provided the underpinning data for the research,” he humbly says.

The research unearthed a crucial finding: existing regulations established by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) were simply inadequate to address the contemporary challenges of pilot transfers. “One of the key themes of the research was that the regulation was not fit for purpose,” Ewan says. “I kept hearing people say to us that it was a waste of time trying to get the International Maritime Organization to open and amend the regulation, and if we did it would take years. All that made me think was that we better start now then!”

Collaboration with industry professionals and relentless lobbying efforts brought Ewan’s research to the forefront of discussions at the IMO. “It was only a small piece of the puzzle in a much bigger picture, but I am proud to say it helped.”

### A proud recognition

In recognition of his achievements, Ewan was a recipient of the 2023 Merchant Navy Medal for Meritorious Service. On Merchant Navy Day, the UK government honours seafarers with Merchant Navy Medals – the highest medal of honour within the maritime sector. Merchant Navy Medals have been awarded since 2016 for significant contributions to the maritime industry. Each year, seafarers are nominated for the medals by their colleagues, friends and family.

The recognition served as a powerful validation and was a reminder that positive change, however incremental, is always celebrated in a society that strives for continuous improvement. “Being involved in, and helping to change something for the better can at times feel like an impossible task, but with the right help and perseverance impossible tasks are worth taking on. Being awarded the Merchant Navy Medal was truly an honour and it reminded me that we live in a society that doesn’t always get things right, but when we make a positive change it doesn’t go unnoticed,” he says.

Today, Ewan is harbour master and director of port operations at Peterhead Port Authority. He continues to advocate for seafarers and pilots in the industry. With welfare front of mind,



Seafarers can help improve safety of pilot transfers

Credit: Stefan Krause, CC BY-SA 3.0 DEED

he tells *The Sea* that if he could change one thing tomorrow it would be to improve living and working conditions for seafarers.

And speaking directly to seafarers, Ewan delivers a call to action for seafarers on an issue close to his heart: please elevate pilot transfer safety to the

same level of critical importance given to other high-risk tasks on board, such as enclosed space entries or working aloft. A simple conversation with the pilot about potential improvements to transfer arrangements could have a significant impact. “A small change can save a life,” he says.📞

*“There is something very satisfying integrating into a bridge team and helping the Master and crew safely navigate into port”*



Ewan receives his Merchant Navy Medal from the Princess Royal

# theSea Leisure Page

There are many health benefits to spending down-time solving puzzles. Lower stress levels, better memory, uplifted mood, improved problem-solving abilities, and better work performance are just some of them.

## Sudoku

The aim of Sudoku is to fill in the empty cells so that each column, row and 3x3 region contain the numbers 1 to 9 exactly once. Find the answers to both puzzles in the next issue.

### MEDIUM LEVEL

	3		6			8	5	
				9	2	6		
9		1						
3			7					
5			1		9			2
				4				8
					4			6
		6	2	7				
	5	7			8			9

### TRICKY LEVEL

			6					
	7		4				6	9
		1			7		4	
1		7			4		8	
	6			3			1	
3		8			7		2	
1		3			9			
4	5				8		7	
					2			

Credit: www.sudokuholiday.com

### EASY LEVEL

solution (Issue 1 2024)

5	3	4	7	9	2	8	1	6
7	2	1	3	8	6	4	9	5
8	9	6	4	1	5	3	2	7
4	1	2	6	7	3	5	8	9
3	7	8	2	5	9	1	6	4
6	5	9	8	4	1	7	3	2
2	6	5	1	3	7	9	4	8
1	4	7	9	2	8	6	5	3
9	8	3	5	6	4	2	7	1

### TRICKY LEVEL

solution (Issue 1 2024)

4	6	1	5	3	7	8	9	2
7	9	5	8	6	2	3	1	4
3	8	2	1	4	9	7	5	6
2	3	8	6	5	4	9	7	1
9	5	4	7	1	8	2	6	3
1	7	6	2	9	3	4	8	5
6	2	9	4	8	1	5	3	7
5	4	3	9	7	6	1	2	8
8	1	7	3	2	5	6	4	9

## Jumble

Can you correctly unscramble these anagrams to form four words? If so, send your answers by email to [thesea@missiontoseafarers.org](mailto:thesea@missiontoseafarers.org) by June 28, 2024. All correct answers will be entered into a draw for a chance to win a Mission to Seafarers' Goodie Bag, containing a mug and handmade woolly hat. Please include your answers, name, the vessel you are working on, your nationality and finish this sentence: "I like The Mission to Seafarers because..."

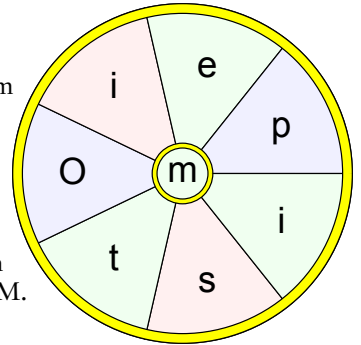
- 1) Builtnarc 2) Hortlett 3) Elhew 4) Argonerte

Issue 1, 2024 solutions:

- 1) Cabotage 2) Capacity 3) Chandler 4) Customs

## Word wheel

This word wheel is made from an eight-letter word. Try and find that word, then make as many words of three letters or more as you can from these letters. You can only use each letter once, and each word must include the letter M.



Answer for Issue 1, 2024 issue:

25 possible words, eight-letter word was Backhaul

## Flag code

Can you tell us what words these flags are communicating? Answer in the next issue.

Answer for Issue 1, 2024: Consignment



See Michael Grey's feature on page 8



They seem to be looking for a better work-life balance!

# Help for seafarers around the world

Are you one of the 1.89 million people around the world working at sea, or a loved one of someone who is?

The Mission to Seafarers is a great source of support for anyone working in the industry, and we've been helping people like you since the 19th century.

We work in over 200 ports in 50 countries and are available 365 days a year. We can provide help and support, no matter your nationality, gender or faith. Our network of chaplains, staff and volunteers can help with any problem – whether it's emotional, practical or spiritual help that you need.

## Our services include:

- **Ship visits** – we carry out approximately 43,000 ship visits a year, welcoming crews to ports, providing access to communication facilities and offering assistance and advice on mental health and wellbeing.
- **Transport** – Our teams can arrange free transportation to the local town, shopping mall, doctor, dentist or a place of worship.
- **Seafarers' Centres** – We operate over 120 Flying Angel centres around the world, offering visiting seafarers a safe space to relax between voyages, purchase supplies, seek support for any problems they might have and stay in touch with their families.
- **Emergency support** – Our teams are trained in pastoral support, mental health first aid and critical incident stress counselling. We can also provide advocacy support.
- **Family networks** – We operate these networks in the Philippines and India where seafarers' families can meet, share information and access support.

Our mission is to care for the shipping industry's most important asset: its people.

To find out where we work, visit [www.missiontoseafarers.org/our-ports](http://www.missiontoseafarers.org/our-ports). Here you can find information about all our centres, including contact details, facilities and opening times.



## CREW HELP CONTACTS

### SeafarerHelp

Free, confidential, multilingual helpline for seafarers and their families available 24 hours a day, 365 days per year, provided by ISWAN.

Direct dial: +44 20 7323 2737

Email: [help@seafarerhelp.org](mailto:help@seafarerhelp.org)

### WeCare

Our WeCare e-learning programme gives seafarers access to mental health advice and wellbeing resources on board and on shore.

For more information contact your local Seafarer Centre, [www.missiontoseafarers.org/our-ports](http://www.missiontoseafarers.org/our-ports).

### CrewHelp

The Mission to Seafarers can provide help and support if you have a welfare or justice issue.

Please get in touch with us at [crewhelp@mtsmail.org](mailto:crewhelp@mtsmail.org)

### Get in touch!

Have you got news or views that you'd like to share with *The Sea*? Please get in touch with the Editor,

Carly Fields at

[thesea@missiontoseafarers.org](mailto:thesea@missiontoseafarers.org)

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**Happy@Sea**

Free port welfare and wellbeing services from The Mission to Seafarers. Scan the QR Code to download the app





The banner features three cartoon characters (two men and one woman) representing seafarers. The background is blue with white waves at the bottom.

# The world needs heroes

*Small acts of heroism can change the world*

By The Revd Canon Andrew Wright



Credit: Solihin Kentjana from Pixabay

**D**o you have any heroes? They might be famous people you have never met. They might be among your family, friends or even among your fellow crew. There are many different types of hero. However, among the qualities will be a willingness to make sacrifices and to go a long way beyond the call of duty in the service of your fellow men and women.

There has always been huge heroism amongst seafarers. You give up so much for so long in carrying out your roles. You sustain world trade and bring us

all more than 90% of all we consume. Although you are often invisible, that makes you no less heroic. The work of The Mission to Seafarers – and indeed so much maritime welfare endeavour – was built on the heroic service of many individuals, and it is still sustained by such heroism today. I see it often in my travels and in the stories I read.

Heroism, though, is something for which we should all strive. The Bible is full of heroes. Interestingly, they are often the most unlikely people. Think of the young shepherd David and his

enormous courage against the famed giant warrior Goliath. He showed courage beyond that of far more likely characters.

Think of Moses, a man with a lowly birth, a murder in his past and a terrible stammer. Though he felt very inadequate, he went on to take on Pharaoh and lead the people of Israel out of slavery.

Think of Peter, a humble fisherman who was so scared that he denied he knew Jesus three times. Yet he went on to be the rock on which the church was built.

Then above all there is Jesus himself. A seemingly ordinary man from a very ordinary village in remote Galilee. He modelled a courageous and sacrificial love that has never been surpassed. Even in the face of torture and crucifixion, it never failed.

That heroism changed the world and such heroism, such loving sacrifice – in you and I – can alone change our fragile and often hateful world today. We should all aspire to heroism. To the kind of love and self-sacrifice that always goes the extra mile with people, in whatever contexts we find ourselves. Though it might not be recognised, be assured that God sees it. It is such heroism that changes the world. And never forget the famous words of Joshua 1:9 “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” ☺

*The Revd Canon Andrew Wright is secretary general of The Mission to Seafarers.*

## A prayer of F.B. Meyer

*Make us, O blessed Master, strong in heart, full of courage, fearless of danger, holding pain and danger cheap when they lie in the path of duty.*

*May we be strengthened with all might by thy Spirit in our hearts.*

*Amen*

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to Seafarers**

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or scan the QR code opposite.

