

# GLAD TIDINGS

(Newsletter No. 2)

## DATE SET FOR 2009 NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN WA

The Mission to Seafarers National Council met in Brisbane on the 28-29 May 2008.

The meeting decided that the 2009 national conference would be held in Western Australia. The actual venue is a retreat house hosted by the Sisters of St Joseph, named "Penola by the Sea" in Safety Bay, which is about one hours drive south of Perth.

The conference will start the evening of Monday 7 September, and conclude the morning of Friday 11 September 2009. More details about the conference location and program will be distributed when available. So, as a first step please put the dates in your 2009 diary.



## THREE CHEERS FOR CAPTAIN LAURA PINASCO

Still in the West, one of the youngest ever captains of a livestock vessel arrived in Fremantle Port, in April. Thirty year old Laura Pinasco was appointed captain of the Stella Deneb in March. The Fremantle trip, in charge of the world's largest livestock carrier, was part of her first voyage as skipper.



Laura was raised in Genoa, Italy and first went to sea in 1997 and has worked her way up from deck officer to master. She was in charge of an unusually large crew of ninety men working a 51,000 tonne ship carrying 21,000 head of cattle bound for SE Asia. Some of the crew included Australian stockman, engineers, chefs and 55 people just to care for the livestock.

Laura says, "Captaining a livestock vessel is more challenging than other forms of carriers- you are responsible for a live cargo and you must always be aware of how the animals are coping and traveling".

The Deneb set a world record last year when it transported 22,814 cattle from Darwin to SE Asian ports. Laura was then the chief officer on that record voyage.

We look forward to Captain Laura and her crews visiting Aussie ports in the future.

### **SHIP VISITING WELFARE COURSE STILL BEING PLANNED**

Congratulations to our five chaplains who completed the ship visiting welfare training course in Melbourne recently. John Wong (Bunbury), Ian McGilvray (Dampier), Arthur Hinsely (Hobart), Dave Masters (Port Kembla) and John Marcon (Auckland) have all now received their accreditation certificates from London. Although our men are keen to start running the training courses for MTS ship visitors, bus drivers, chaplains and volunteer staff, the question of funding needs to be worked out first. Each one of our chaplains is hoping to run at least one course in their region in the second half of this year. Stay tuned for course dates as they become available.

### **AMWS- CHAMPIONS OF THE SEAFARER**

As many of you would know the Australian Maritime Welfare Society (AMWS) has been a wonderful supporter of our work over many years. The AMWS had its origins as the Sydney Sailors Home way back in 1863 and since that early time has been an indefatigable supporter of those ministering to seafarers.

Over the last twelve months, AMWS has been able to provide funding for approximately half of our Seafaring Centres including, Port Pirie, Fremantle, Geraldton, Townsville, Albany, Geelong, Gladstone, Hobart, Dampier, Port Kembla and Sydney. Of course, this money is very welcomed and used to provide essential services so that we can make the life of the visiting seafarer that more welcoming and enjoyable when staying ever so briefly, on Australian soil.

In May, Col Brown gladly accepted the kind invitation from the members of AMWS to give a presentation of MTS' ministry around our nation's ports, at the conclusion of their Annual General Meeting. The presentation was enthusiastically received and generated lively and valuable discussion.

Following the presentation, Col was able to spend time with Captain Alan Tait, Graham Lightfoot and Stan Moriarty to personally thank them on behalf of all MTS' Centres for AMWS' unfailing support and encouragement.

All MTS Centres are encouraged to keep the work of AMWS in our minds and prayers- and to remember to give them feedback by way of email and photos, showing how their funding was well spent for the benefit of seafarers.



## **IAN MCGILVRAY RECEIVES AWARD**

It was a great thrill to hear, that the Revd Ian McGilvray our MTS chaplain in Dampier WA, was recently awarded a noteworthy award. Although Ian will probably cringe at the thought of this honour being aired nationally, we could not think of a more worthy and hard working recipient of the 2008 Rio Tinto Community Award. Congratulations Ian!

Both our Centres at Dampier and Port Hedland are experiencing increasing demands on their limited resources- as record breaking tonnages of iron ore, head for Asian ports. If we are to provide the quality of ministry we aspire to in the Pilbara region, the support of the large mining companies and other Port users in the region is critical.



## **KNOCKING THE COBWEBS OFF OUR WEBSITE**

The “Australian Ports’ section of the global Mission to Seafarers website ([www.missiontoseafarers.org](http://www.missiontoseafarers.org)) has now been updated and should well serve the needs of the seafarer heading for Australian shores. Our current Australian Mission to Seafarers website is to be retired to enable the creation of a new style website that will serve the

Australian seafaring ministry more as a tool for information, advocacy, education, networking and evangelization. We hope to have the new website “on air” soon.



## **WELL EARNED RETIREMENTS**

In the last month we have seen the retirement of three of our legendary ship visitors, namely Gordon Lawrence in Gladstone, Harvey Burcher in Sydney and Capt. Keith Dann at Hastings. Words cannot do justice to describe the enormous contribution that these three men have contributed to the life of the Mission to Seafarers in this country.

But we should at least try:

### **HARVEY BURCHER**

In order of good looks we acknowledge Harvey’s contribution first! Harvey, with the assistance of Gabriella has written a reflective piece on his ministry entitled *Fifteen Wonderful Years*, which goes like this:

*Thank you for those past and present for giving me the opportunity to share in the work of the Sydney Mission to Seafarers.*

*I started of in December 1992 to relieve Toshi Yano, who drove the mission bus,*

*two weeks quickly become a full time job of visiting ships, doing duty chaplain duties in the Centre as well as helping to drive and maintain the buses.*

*The highlight of the work was when Gabriella and I were given the opportunity to take care of the mission's Botany Centre on the 24th August 2001, which was located at the end of Brotherson Dock.*

*This place was able to give the Mission a real face to all those who passed by or came into visit us in the two and half years we were there.*

*As a Centre, it never turned out to be a success as it's services were limited, i.e.: there was no shop or currency exchange, also September the eleventh created security and access problems in the area, when the gates between the docks were locked.*

*In spite of that Gabriella and I made a home of it and were there most of the time, slept there three nights a week and had all our meals there.*

*In the year 2002 I traversed 1001 gangways at Botany alone.*

*Gabriella had over two hundred pot plants which made the Centre like an oasis, amid containers, bollards and chains which were stored in yards around the Centre. Diesel engined container trains were shunted on the line behind us, we could hear the bumping of the containers from Patricks wharf day and night.*

*The pot plants were sold at The Harbour Light Women's' Guild veranda sales in*

*Sussex Street to raise money for the seafarers.*

*We had lots of visitors over for coffee or a meal. We held a Bible Study there on Wednesday evenings with Rob and Greta Flinders.*

*We worked along side Rob Flinders and his Seamen's Christian Friend Society and Sister Mary Lahey in her Stella Marris work.*

*Because we had a close relationship with Les Symes and Wilfred Melgar, both managers of the ITF Boomerang Club, we were able to help in the formation of what is now the Sydney Seafarers Centre, also located near the dock area.*

*As well as meaningful talks with the seafarers, we did our best to spend real time with them on the ships trying to experience their day to day life, their feelings and their fears. So many of them put on a brave face, but are hurting underneath. Gabriella has taken on a mother role which was and is greatly appreciated.*

*We went out a number of times with the pilots to take out or bring in a ship, twice on a tug boat.*

*Once at Darling Harbour I did life boat practice with an Australian crew, and at other times went out on Stanards launches with crews as far as the gangway platform of their tanker, anchored in Botany Bay.*

*A lot of these things were done when security and insurance were not such great issues, so we took grater risks to*

*witness to our Lord Jesus and show the Mission's love for seafarers.*

*Thank you Tom Hill, Graham Hardy, Ian Porter and fellow team members for your support over these last fifteen years.*

*Harvey and Gabriella Burcher.*



### **“GOLDEN” GORDON LAWRENCE**

is next on the good looks barometer. Col Brown and Graham Miller, at the invitation of Mike Vercoe visited our Gladstone Centre in April to farewell Gordon Lawrence Gladstone's main ship visitor over many years. Gordon relates a funny story about how quite often certain seafarers have difficulty pronouncing “Gordon” and instead he is called “Golden” or “Mr Golden”! Without a doubt he could not have a better nickname, as Gordon's affection and concern for the well being of the visiting seafarer was remarkable- indeed, his contribution to the life and spirit of MTS Gladstone was “golden”. His retirement has left a huge hole in operations for the present. Gordon and Judy are heading south to Bribie Island- not too far from MTS Brisbane, where rumour abounds that Brisbane would love Gordon to “keep his gangplank

climbing skills alive” on the Brisbane River (which sounds like more fun than lawn bowls or golf!)

With Gordon's departure, Mike Vercoe and his team are working hard at planning for future challenges.

Gladstone is our fifth busiest port for ship visits- much of this activity involves the export of central Queensland coal which continues to increase in volume.



Gordon Lawrence at the Gladstone Centre

### **CAPT KEITH DANN - NOT QUITE RETIRED BUT ALMOST**

As many know, Keith has been a “larger than life” figure in the seafaring ministry in Victorian waters for over thirty five years. Keith's contribution at both Victorian State Council level and Hastings Port level is second to none. It is not possible to detail here Keith's immense contribution but he has given the editor a very interesting record of the history of the seafaring ministry at Hastings Port which also includes its historical connection with Melbourne Port. That document is available to anyone interested in a copy.

The Hastings Seafaring Centre under Keith's leadership has been richly ecumenical and will continue to be with

the very capable Geoff Stockton as the new Chairman and Eddie Tearle as Vice President steering the ship.

Keith's wife Pat's huge contribution to the welcoming of seafarers and the smooth running of the Hastings Centre should also be gratefully acknowledged. Together they were a formidable team with great passion and concern for those who sailed Victorian waters. Keith and Pat have not completely retired yet from the Hastings Centre as they continue to look after the Centre on Saturdays.

Our apologies to Pat for her retirement being mentioned third on the good looking scale. It was Keith who caused that Pat- without him holding the Dann team back, you would have leaped Harvey Burcher and gone straight to number one position in a heartbeat!



### **CAN JOAN CATCH JACK?**

Proudly giving one of the Reports at the Sydney MTS AGM last month, was Joan Fyffe. Joan is one of the living legends of MTS Sydney who has faithfully served the seafarers to Sydney Harbour and Port Botany for the past sixty years, with no indication of slowing down!

Since she was a schoolgirl in Auckland Joan has had regular contact with

visiting seafarers. In fact she married one of them when she moved to Sydney in 1954. Joan recently said that "volunteering just became a part of my life". When asked the secret to her longevity she said, "I do not know, I just keep being friendly" and added, "I can't go on forever but you can go on for as long as you can be useful."

Sydney Mission to Seafarers has been remarkably blessed to have had Joan leading the way in Christian love and charity for all these years. Her remarkable dedication gives a brand new meaning to the word "useful". Hopefully, Joan will write a reflection on her vocation to seafarers for inclusion in our next newsletter. We look forward to that.

In our last newsletter we featured Hobart's Jack Tomes' seventy years of service for MTS Hobart. Subsequently, the "Flying Angel News" issued a challenge to all MTS stations around the world to nominate another who has served longer than Jack- who is still powering on. Is Jack the world record holder? Does Joan hold the world record for female volunteers? Maybe the Flying Angel News can give us answers to these questions in due course.

Joan Fyffe in blue dress



## NEWS FROM AROUND THE MTS CENTRES

\* **GERALDTON**...many are working hard to ensure that the doors of the Centre soon open. The AMWS has made a very generous donation to enable critical electrical repairs to be carried out. Negotiations continue with Heritage Western Australia, and a number of people have come forward indicating their willingness to support the ministry at Geraldton Port when required.

\* **MELBOURNE**...At Melbourne's recent AGM, Col Brown gave a presentation on the "Cardiff Report of 20007- Port Based Welfare Services for Seafarers". The purpose of the presentation was to help the meeting tackle particular issues confronting the seafaring ministry in Melbourne waters- such as the changing profile and needs of the modern seafarer.

Bishop Philip Huggins has stepped down from the Chair of the Victorian State Council and has appointed Archdeacon Andrew Oddy as the new Chairman. A resounding "thank you" is extended to Bishop Philip for his leadership and encouragement of the seafaring ministry in Victorian waters over the years, and we wish Andrew every blessing in his new role at the helm in these interesting and exciting times.

Preliminary discussions have been put in train by the relevant Melbourne bishops to explore the possibility of an amalgamation of the seafaring ministries of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne and Mission to Seafarers Melbourne operating from the Flying

Angel Club, in Flinders Street Docklands.

\* **GLADSTONE** ...The Gladstone team have a challenging time ahead following the completion of an ambitious draft Five Year Operational Plan 2008-2013 prepared by Brian Whelan for the Centre- which is soon to be examined in depth by the Revd Mike Vercoe and his able team of volunteers. Good luck with the planning, and then even more luck for the real hard part- the implementation. Our prayers and thoughts are with Gladstone in these demanding times.

\* **HOBART BUS**...The Revd Bruce Mitchell (below) is pleased to report that his Hobart Centre has been donated a bus by the people of North West Shipping & Towing in Hobart. Our MTS Centre is very grateful for the generous gift and will have no trouble whatsoever putting it to good use for the benefit of those overseas seafarers journeying into the beautiful Derwent River



\* **PORT KEMBLA FUNDRAISER**...There was fun and dance galore, at the very successful fund raising fancy dress "Pirate's Night" held at the Illawarra Yacht Club, on the shores of Lake Illawarra last month. Lay chaplain Dave Masters praised his hard

working committee for their tremendous effort in hosting the event. Dave's team was thrilled to see Bishop Garry arrive at the event- and later demonstrate his not insignificant story telling and dance skills. Port Kembla very much appreciated Garry's big effort to change his travel plans from Newcastle to Adelaide, to go via Wollongong to support their big night.



\* **PORTLAND WELL DONE...**Some people would not be aware of the plight of the M.V. Malakhov which was in terrible shape needing repairs and food while voyaging from New Zealand to India for scrapping. The ship and her crew were forced to spend over two months at Portland Port. When the day of departure finally arrived for the doomed ship, the master and crew of the M. V. Malakhov wrote this letter to the good people of MTS Portland:

*The Master and crew of the M.V. Malakhov express their gratitude and deepest appreciation towards the "Mission for Seafarers and also the people of Portland at large, for their show of love and affection during our extended stay of more than two months at Portland anchorage and at Portland Port Berth.*

*The outpouring of affection and concern showered upon us shall forever remain etched in our memory.*

*The Mission to Seafarers provided us yeoman's service by way of offering us free telephone cards, chocolates, cookies and other provisions. As also arranging visits to places of interest at Portland and a BBQ party. Especially we were feeling desolate after the events at sea on our voyage from New Zealand.*

*A very special mention for Ken and Bill of Pilot Boat Tiger, who went out of their way in meeting our day to day needs and many thanks to these mates for regular and free supplies of newspapers.*

*The people of Portland expressed their deep concern at our hapless plight through the media and word of mouth. Many thanks to Portlanders and may God bless them all....*

*Signed  
Captain JP Gupta, Master and crew of Malakhov*

\* **BRISBANE...**In the first edition of "Glad Tidings" we mentioned the visit of Ms Quentin Bryce the Governor of Queensland, to the MTS Brisbane Seafaring Centre for the blessing of its building extensions. The fitting climax of that day was the joyous dedication of the Centre's Chapel of St Nicholas, led by Bishop Godfrey, Bishop Geoffrey Smith and the Revd Ron Paschke.

Only days after these celebrations, Australia welcomed the Prime Minister's announcement that Ms Quentin Bryce was to be the next Governor General of Australia. Bishop Godfrey would be

particularly pleased with this news as the Governor of Queensland was raised and educated in his diocese of Rockhampton.



The Governor with Revds John Park and Ron Paschke

\* **SYDNEY**...Following the retirement of Harvey Burcher, two new chaplains have joined the ministry team at Sydney MTS. We wish both the Revd Un Hui Tay and Captain Jack Starman every blessing as they embark on their new ministries along the sandy shores of Botany Bay and rocky ones of Sydney Harbour.

\* **GEELONG**...The Revd Noah Park reports that Geelong has had record numbers of seafarers visiting in the last two months. Noah has kindly offered to prepare the 2009 Mission to Seafarers' Calender and we have no doubts that the new edition will match the high standard he set with previous ones.

\* **BURNIE**...Doug Cousins expressed excitement that Burnie MTS has welcomed two new "young"volunteers to their ministry. We will have to contact Doug for his definition of "young" but it is believed that both volunteers are in their twenties. If so, that is "young"! Let's hope that many of our other Centres can follow Burnie's lead.

\* **PORT LINCOLN**...news out of Port Lincoln suggests that plans are afoot for a proposal to ship significant amounts of iron ore out of Port Lincoln situated on the southern tip of Eyre Peninsular SA. A natural deep harbour makes Port Lincoln attractive to large bulk grain carriers topping up loads from shallower ports in SA and Victoria. It seems that many environmental hurdles are there to be negotiated before we see the exporting of serious amounts of iron ore from this beautiful harbour.

\* **TOWNSVILLE**...Graham Miller and Col Brown last week represented the MTS Australian Council at a conference in Townsville hosted by Lloyds List DCN and the Port of Townsville. Themes addressed included the predicted impacts of climate change on port users, and the predicted expansion of ports, particularly those handling iron ore and coal exports. Most of our regional ports were represented including Albany, Port Hedland, Tasports, Flinders Ports, Brisbane, Geelong and Townsville. The conference gave Col and Graham the chance to meet a number of key Port personnel and discuss ways in which Ports and Port users could more effectively support the work of MTS.



Rev Graham Miller at Townsville

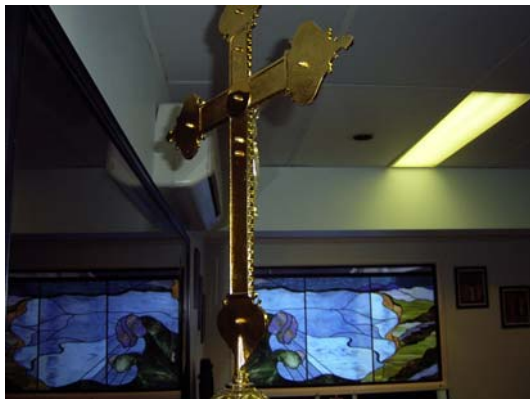
James Bidgood MP the Federal member for Dawson, delivered the keynote address on behalf of Anthony Albanese the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development & Local Government. James, whose local office is in Mackay, was keen to learn more of the work of MTS around the nation, and has intimated his willingness to support our work in whatever ways become possible.

\* **BUNBURY**...has received ITF funding to purchase a new bus for which the Centre is extremely grateful. Negotiations to export coal from Collie out of Bunbury Port are expected to be concluded soon. The coal is presently being exported from Kwinana Port but Bunbury is more attractive for its closer proximity to Collie.

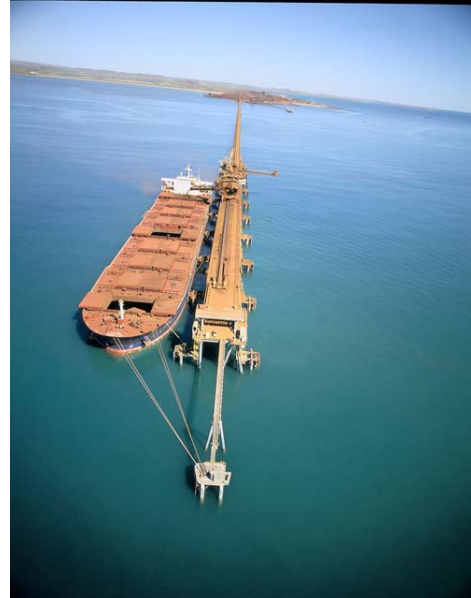
### **THE SEA, PRAYER AND GOD**

On the door to the entrance of a naval chapel are found the words:

*The sea says many things about God.  
He who knows not how to pray should  
go to the sea and he will see how soon  
he learns.*



### **CAPE LAMBERT (Port Walcott) WA**



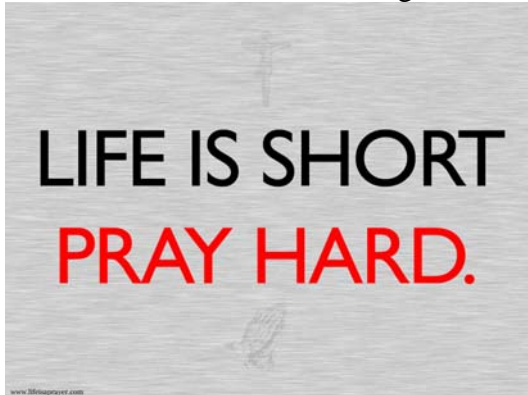
The MTS Australian Council has resolved to support a request from the Revd Ian McGilvray of Dampier Centre that we explore the possibility of establishing a seafaring ministry at Cape Lambert (about 75 klms north east of Dampier WA). Cape Lambert, also known as Port Walcott expects the visit of almost five hundred iron ore ships this year- increasing to over one thousand in five years time. The average size crew working these ships is twenty five. This is just one way in which the MTS Australian Council is determined to discern and respond to, “the sign of the times”.

### **SEA SUNDAY REMINDER**

As Sea Sunday rapidly approaches do not forget the availability of the excellent resource materials on the MTS global website [www.missiotoseafarers.org/](http://www.missiotoseafarers.org/) and the Aussie version drafted by Rev Ken

Cahill that we emailed to all Centres some time ago.

Please remember to send in short articles and good resolution images of your local Sea Sunday celebrations for inclusion in the next edition of ‘Glad Tidings’.



## **LONDON BOUND**

Our two seafaring bishops, Garry Weatherill (West Coast) and Godfrey Fryar (East Coast) are heading to the UK in July to participate in the Lambeth Conference. We pray that the Lord care for them and always be with them- in their safe travel and important work.

Col Brown has also been invited by MTS Central Office to attend a week long series of meetings at the same time Lambeth is taking place. Col has been asked by London to give a presentation on his role as Liaison & Support Officer for the Australian Council.

On one of the meeting days, all the world’s seafaring bishops and support secretaries will meet with staff from central office. With a bit of luck, we should get the opportunity to tell all in the northern hemisphere about the tremendous dedication and work being carried out day after day, by our MTS family, at our Aussie seafaring Centres.

One highlight should be the planned visits to the seafaring centres in Tilbury and Southampton.

## **MELBOURNE WELCOMES US IN OCTOBER**

The next meeting of the National Council has been set down for 7-9 October 2008. Melbourne MTS has kindly agreed to our using their facilities for the purposes of our meeting. It will be a great opportunity for members of the national council to renew friendships with Melbourne’s Ken Cahill, Alan Knott, Nigel Porteous, Andrea Fleming and the many other much valued volunteers who are the heart and soul of the Flying Angel Melbourne ministry.



Revd Ken blessing the ANL Wangaratta at her naming in Melbourne recently.

Farewell for now, and please do not forget to send articles and give us feedback on any aspect of the newsletter.

**The Editor**  
**Colin Brown**  
**National Liaison & Support Officer**  
**Mission to Seafarers’ Australian Council**

15 June 2008

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