



INTERNATIONAL SEAFARERS MINISTRY
in partnership with
Action International Ministries



CANADA: 3015A 21st St. NE, Calgary, AB T2E 7T1 - USA: P.O. Box 398 Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043

April, 2024

Dear Friends,



I hope not to confuse my readers too much today...it's actually near the beginning of March as I start to write this Newsletter. And yes, there are some things I want to write about today. However, I've noted that the Easter Season is coming soon as well, but not till the very end of March. As of this writing, Grace and I are still serving on board a cruise ship and will be for some weeks yet, including Easter. I intend to include some photos of our Easter Service to be held here on board which means that I will be a little late in actually sending out this Newsletter. I'll apologize ahead of time...you won't get this Newsletter right at the beginning of April ☺

The Old Testament story of Gideon (Judges, Chapter 6) contains these words, spoken by the Angel of the LORD to Gideon: "...go in the strength you have..." Now, there's a lot more to be said about all of that, but basically what we're talking about is the idea that we, in our human weaknesses, are able to do things for the Lord because of the strength that HE gives us. In other words, we do nothing in our own strength or abilities, but only through the Power of the Spirit of God given to us. This is especially true in Biblical ministry and missional activity. I feel very strongly about this conviction.

Over these last few months, we have witnessed the Power of the Word of God as He has used us to lay it before all those who have attended Worship Services and Bible Study Sessions, both guests and crew. I've lost count of the number of times someone has said, "Thank you for the Word today! I've not heard or understood it as well until now..." Many have said, "There's something you said in the message the other day...can we talk about that some more?" Guest attendance remains strong at both Services and study sessions for which we remain truly grateful and we praise God that He places the desire to attend as a high priority for them.

Among the Crew Fellowship gatherings, we stand continuously amazed at the Goodness of God. We started out with just a few members of the Indonesian crew meeting every Monday night. We've also been able to organize an "international" group where, at one time, we noted that there were twelve nationalities represented! We emphasize with all of them the importance of meeting together around God's Word regularly and encouraging each other to be committed. They have taken this to heart very well, and we see new people joining almost every week.



INTERNATIONAL SEAFARERS MINISTRY
in partnership with
Action International Ministries



CANADA: 3015A 21st St. NE, Calgary, AB T2E 7T1 - USA: P.O. Box 398 Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043

One of the dynamics of a long voyage is the fact that we have opportunity to be deeper involved in the lives of many. For example, on a two-week voyage we can often complete the entire voyage without any particularly challenging issues. Having now been at sea for three months, however, we've seen instances of both guests and crew members having to leave the ship to go home due to illness that needs to be treated at home, or death of family members back home. These are difficult occasions. Many prayers have been raised on behalf of those affected. Many words of comfort or assurance or condolence have been spoken. We've also heard of a tragic accident on board another ship, resulting in the deaths of two crew members. Such news hits very hard throughout the seafaring community. We thank our God for the opportunities to express words of Biblical comfort during these times and we also praise Him for the faith and conviction we've witnessed during some of these occasions.

As I write this paragraph, we have just finished conducting an interview-type conversation for all the guests on board this ship. The Rabbi, the Priest, and myself as the Protestant Chaplain were interviewed by the Cruise Director asking about our backgrounds and our motivations for our ministry, etc. The "floor was then opened" for questions from the guests. The very first question asked dealt with exactly what I have just described in the previous paragraph...how do we deal with tragic circumstances when they occur on the ship? Yes, indeed, cruises are not only about beautiful vacation experiences. When tragedy strikes, the effect is felt everywhere, especially among the crew members who feel very much a part of a broader family that includes their colleagues on other ships. I was profoundly touched and honored to address that question from our Biblical perspectives, given that we had been dealing with exactly that in the past few days with both guests (and especially) our team members; our on-board family.

Also in these things, we praise God for providing us with His Comfort, Strength and Peace as we collectively deal with difficult occasions. And we are thankful for opportunities to share such divine gifts with those who are not so familiar with the Gospel, or who are struggling in their relationship with God.

Time has moved on, and as I write today, Grace and I have stopped in at various Far East countries and one of the most striking aspects of the last couple of weeks has been the predominance of eastern religions. Japan, China, Vietnam, etc. are awash in ornate temples of various religions and in all of these countries one will hear that Christianity is a very small minority. In fact, in the Communist countries of the far east, it is widely known and freely spoken of that, although most religions are "tolerated to a degree", it would be best for people to avoid all religion, and proclaim themselves as atheist. If one wants to be successful, or have a better job, or a good apartment to live in...generally, if one wants "a better life", one should disavow any "god" and be a member of the Communist party. And yet, we have been able to speak with Christians who, although they may be meeting secretly, profess to having a strong faith and express their joy in the Lord, despite their circumstance. What a blessing to hear them speak!



INTERNATIONAL SEAFARERS MINISTRY
in partnership with
Action International Ministries



CANADA: 3015A 21st St. NE, Calgary, AB T2E 7T1 - USA: P.O. Box 398 Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043



Now I finally get to share a little about our onboard Easter Sunrise Worship Service! I have to say that this was absolutely the most unique Easter Service we have ever experienced. As you can see by the photos above, our worship service was held on board, on the open aft deck, at sunrise, and with temperatures in the upper 80's (F) even before the sun came up at 0600. That's not the "unique" part ☺

What you can't really see in the photos, is that we were anchored just off-shore in Male, Maldives, part of an island group just south of the mainland of India. After many weeks of planning, with various logistical challenges and "timing" and "content" concerns with senior staff on board, we finally had a plan in place and were happy to be able to conduct this Service which was extremely important to many guests and crew. I was even able to help supervise the setup of over 200 chairs and keyboard and broadcast equipment, late in the evening (Saturday). It was then that a couple of our guests informed me of something that absolutely no one had thought of; not senior staff, not myself either.

Maldives is officially an Islamic country. It's government and policies are based on Sharia Law. It is completely illegal and forbidden to practice ANY religion or hold ANY religious gatherings, in public, anywhere in this area. Anyone caught doing so could be imprisoned for five years or more. In this country, floggings are still common and thieves can still get their hands removed!! Bibles are illegal, as is converting anyone out of Islam. And here we were, getting ready to proclaim that Christ is risen! With large speakers and a powerful sound system that could probably be heard shoreside! During Ramadan!

Just before the Service, after making some inquiries, I was informed that in the outlying resort islands of the Maldives, practicing one's faith in private is tolerated. We, on board the ship, would be considered as such; a "private resort island". The Easter Sunday Sunrise Service went ahead as planned, and ironically, we were able to hear the Muslim calls to prayer coming from the shoreside during our Service. I'm sure they heard us as well! We had a most wonderful and blessed Easter Sunday and the Word of God went out. The message of salvation in Jesus Christ and the triumphant event of His resurrection was proclaimed! We praise God for His providence and His protection!



INTERNATIONAL SEAFARERS MINISTRY
in partnership with
Action International Ministries



CANADA: 3015A 21st St. NE, Calgary, AB T2E 7T1 - USA: P.O. Box 398 Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043

Our voyage continues now. Due to the ongoing hostilities in the Middle East, including the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea area, our initial itinerary has been substantially altered. We will now be going around the continent of Africa, making a number of ports of call along the way, before crossing the Atlantic Ocean and returning to Florida, and then we come home in early May.

We continue to stand amazed at all the opportunities God has given us for ministry while we are on board this ship, both among the guests as well as the team members. We remain eternally grateful for all He has given us, and we pray that He will be near to all of us here and see this voyage safely home.

In His Service,
John and Grace Van Huizen john.air2sea@yahoo.ca

To donate to this missionary outreach, please make your check payable to:
"Action International Ministries" and send to the address at the top of this page.
Please attach a separate note: "For the Seafarers Ministry of John and Grace Van Huizen".
To give online, go to www.actioninternational.org/vanhuizen and click the "Donate" button.
A Charitable Tax Receipt will be issued at year-end.

If you do not wish to receive future Newsletters, please contact me to be removed from the mailing list. Thank you.