



STELLA MARIS



> Life at Sea report 2020: *a world in lockdown*
Together, supporting seafarers and fishers through a global pandemic



2020:
a year we'll
never forget.

When everything
stopped, seafarers
didn't.

**These frontline workers
delivered food, medicine
and goods around the world.**

In return, they faced a humanitarian crisis.

But Stella Maris made a difference.

Together, and through our global network
of chaplains and volunteers, we helped.

Thank you.

➤ Life at Sea: a world in lockdown

Adam*, a Samoan seafarer, joined a ship as a deckhand in 2019 on a nine-month contract. Nearly two years later, he was still stranded at sea. Lockdowns, Covid-19 restrictions and the challenge of crew changes meant he couldn't get home.

Adam missed the birth of his child. He missed Christmas with his family. He became exhausted and strained. Eventually, Adam reached out for help – and Stella Maris was there to provide it.

Adam's story is typical of so many seafarers in 2020. We've truly seen a humanitarian crisis over the past 18 months. Hardworking men and women of the sea have paid a high price to keep us supplied with food, medical equipment and vaccines during the global coronavirus pandemic.

But our chaplains were there when it mattered. A lifeline in the crisis. As you'll see in this report, our unique, global network of support wrapped around seafarers everywhere, providing everyday kindness and vital care.

Now, as we slowly emerge from this crisis, I believe we must focus on three areas to ensure seafarers are supported in the coming years.

- 1) We must not neglect the **vital importance of personal, human connection**. One of the cruelties of Covid-19 was that it kept people apart at a time when they most needed support. Our experience in 2020 showed that, while wellbeing apps, programmes and initiatives to support seafarers are good, nothing can replace the face-to-face, everyday friendship and care provided by our chaplains and ship visitors.
- 2) We must build on the **strength of our global network**. Stella Maris is the world's largest ship-visiting charity, with more than 1,000 chaplains and volunteers in 334 ports in 60 countries. This global coverage puts us in a unique position to provide sustained support to seafarers as they move from country to country.
- 3) We must **grow our Centenary Emergency Fund** to ensure no seafarer faces a crisis alone. This special fund, launched in 2020 to mark our 100-year anniversary, will support bereaved or stranded seafarers or help in medical emergencies. By building up this fund now, we can respond rapidly when a crisis occurs.

We have an opportunity today to shape the future for seafarers. With partners like you – ship managers, owners, P&I clubs, legal firms and flag states – we can step up to put welfare first.

Together, we can make a profound difference to improve the lives of seafarers and fishers everywhere. Thank you.



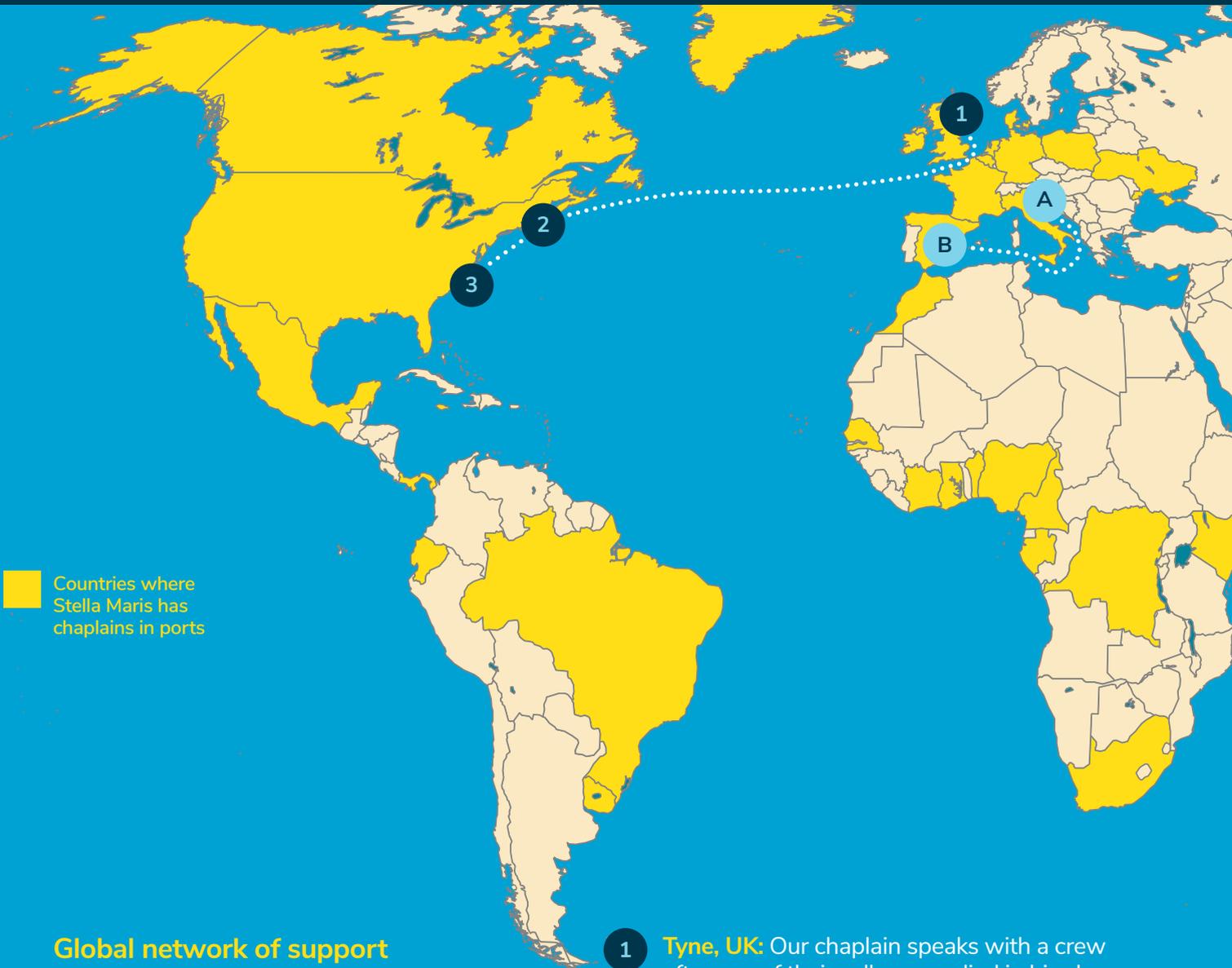
Martin Foley, Chief Executive Officer

Get help for your seafarers

Email concerns@stellamarismail.org

Call +44 (0) 20 7901 1931

*name changed to protect his identity



Global network of support

Increasingly, maritime organisations recognise the importance of seafarers’ wellbeing and are becoming better at caring for their personnel. But the global nature of the shipping industry is a challenge.

How does a shipping management team based in Singapore support a seafarer who needs hospitalisation in Aberdeen? If a Hamburg-based container ship suffers a fatality while in Durban, who counsels the traumatised crew? And when a seafarer longs to step off their vessel for a short break in port, who does he call?

That’s where Stella Maris comes in. Not only do we support in a crisis, wherever it happens, we provide everyday advice, friendship, practical and pastoral help, right around the world.

There is no doubt that happy, appreciated and positive seafarers are better workers and colleagues. Seafarers trust us and look for us in port. The support we provide makes the world of difference.

- 1 **Tyne, UK:** Our chaplain speaks with a crew after one of their colleagues died in his sleep. He provides pastoral care, and contacts the chaplain in their next port of call.
- 2 **New Haven, USA:** Despite a stop-over of just a few hours, our chaplain visits the ship and checks on the welfare of the crew. They talk about the deceased seafarer. Our chaplain prays with the group, provides gifts and contacts the chaplain in their next port.
- 3 **Wilmington, USA:** Our chaplain visits to offer further pastoral support. The crew are extremely grateful for the care they’ve received.
- A **Ortona, Italy:** Shipping company asks us to visit a crew following a spate of unrelated family bereavements.
- B **Barcelona, Spain:** In the vessel’s next port, our chaplains visit twice to provide pastoral support to the bereaved seafarers. They also supply Bibles and faith items.



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Supporting seafarers in crisis

We deal with a number of issues – and these were the cases we helped with in 2020.

Unpaid wages	27%
Death	27%
Repatriation	12%
Hospitalisation	7%
Medical care	5%
Working hours	5%
Piracy	5%
Suicide	3%
Abandonment	3%
Trafficking	2%
Food	2%
Bullying and harassment	2%

Stella Maris: the world's largest ship-visiting network



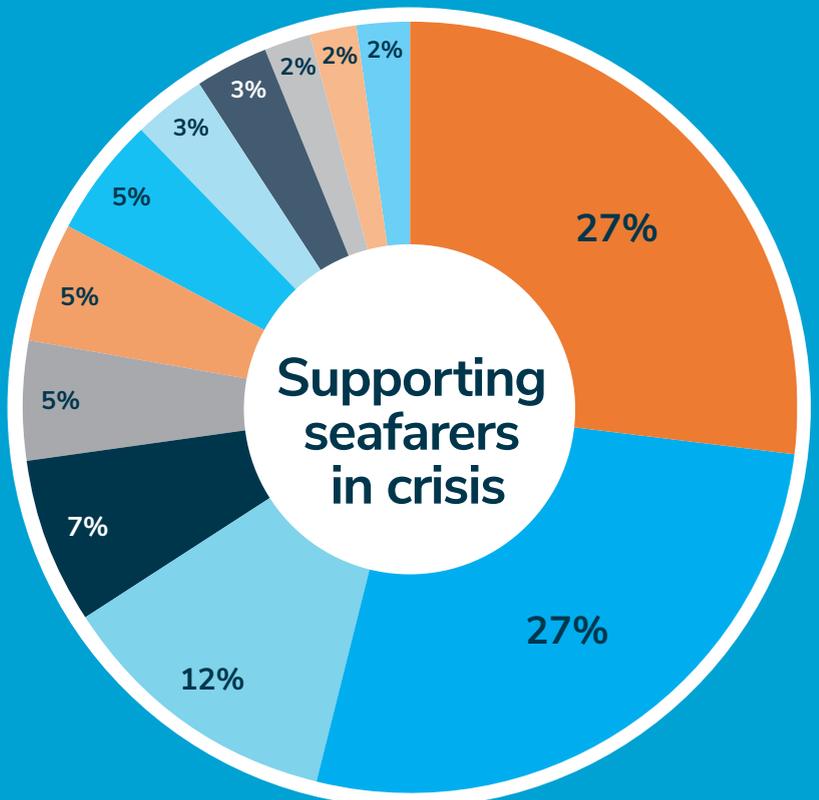
1,000+ chaplains and volunteers



334 ports



60 countries





Abandonment

Ship abandonment is a sinister and dangerous issue for the industry – and in 2020 cases soared to a record high. More than twice as many seafarers were abandoned in 2020 compared to 2019.

Data from the International Maritime Organisation shows there were 76 cases involving more than 1,000 seafarers, mostly in the Middle East and Asia. By comparison, 2019 saw 40 cases of abandonment involving 474 seafarers.

Abandoned seafarers face a perilous situation, and there's no doubt the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the issue. They may be adrift at sea or stranded in a foreign land with no supplies, no wages, no fuel and scant means of communication.

Location: Ravenna, Italy

Issue: Abandonment

Date: July-October 2020

Twenty-four seafarers from two vessels, abandoned for four months in an Italian port, were supported and repatriated with the help of Stella Maris.

The seafarers were on board the Maltese-flagged chemical tanker *Gobustan* and the general cargo vessel *Sultan Bey*, also registered in Malta. Both ships were detained by Italian authorities on charges of outstanding debt. None of the crew were allowed off due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Stella Maris stepped in to source food and fresh drinking water for the desperate seafarers. We provided £2,000 from our Centenary Emergency Fund to buy supplies for the men while we worked on plans for repatriation. This complex task involved overcoming airport closures and flight cancellations and sourcing Covid-19 tests for the crew. The men eventually few home in October.

Carlo Cordone, President of Ravenna's Seafarers' Welfare Committee, paid tribute to the Stella Maris chaplains. "I can assure you that the shiny eyes of those men who had been permitted to go home at last deeply moved me," he said, "You got busy right away to answer our cry for help. A heartfelt thanks to everybody involved."

1,000+
Seafarers
abandoned
in 2020





Modern slavery and human rights abuses

More than 40 million people are in some form of slavery today according to the International Labour Organisation, including more than 24 million in forced labour. With many seafarers coming from nations which may have human rights challenges, the global shipping industry is at risk of modern slavery.

Our chaplains dealt with a number of modern slavery cases in 2020. And we know this is just the tip of the iceberg: seafarers are mistreated every day, but captains refuse to let them leave the vessel so the exploitation continues out of sight.

Location: South Africa

Issue: Exploitation

Date: Throughout 2020

24
million people
in forced
labour globally

In December 2019, our chaplain in South Africa was alerted to six seafarers on a detained fishing vessel who needed urgent help. They had very little food or drinking water, and had run out of fuel and other supplies.

The crew – four men from Myanmar and two from Taiwan – were shivering with cold and one man who was diabetic had run out of medication. Our chaplain provided food, medicine, and warm clothing. “The smiles on the men’s faces spoke volumes,” said chaplain Nicholas Barends.

For almost a whole year, we provided food, water, care and friendship, and liaised with the authorities continually on their behalf. Finally we drove the men to the airport for their long-awaited flight home.



Cardinal Peter Turkson, who leads the global work of Stella Maris from the Vatican, addressed the issue of modern slavery on World

Fisheries Day in November 2020, saying, “The path to full protection of human and labour rights of fishers remains a long and winding road. Yet again, we raise our voice to call for a renewed effort from international organisations and governments... The time for talking is over. It is time to act!”





Death at sea

The ocean is one of the most dangerous workplaces on the planet. Deaths at sea have increased over the past few years.

Meanwhile, the number of seafarer suicides is still not officially recorded. Tragically, our experience suggests these have increased during the Covid-19 pandemic as seafarers struggle under huge pressure.

Stella Maris can help with pastoral care and – at a time when seafarers long for spiritual comfort – our chaplains offer prayer, organise memorial services and help crews through the grief process.

Locations: Philippines, New Zealand, Australia

Issue: Sinking of livestock carrier

Date: September 2020

We supported seafarers in

17

incidents of death at sea

Our chaplains helped following

2

seafarer suicides

Just a day before it was scheduled to arrive in China, tragedy struck the livestock carrier *Gulf Livestock 1*. Hit by a typhoon and stormy seas which may have caused engine failure, the ship sent a distress call at 1.40am on 2nd September. The vessel, which was carrying almost 6,000 cattle and a crew of 43 men, capsized and sank.

Despite a major rescue operation, only three crew were recovered. One, who was found unresponsive, died shortly afterwards. The two survivors were a 45-year-old chief officer and a 30-year-old deckhand, both Filipinos. Extensive searches since have failed to find signs of the 40 missing crew.

A family member of someone on board contacted us to ask for help. We provided vital financial, pastoral and prayer support to families of the missing crew – which included 36 Filipinos, two Australians and two New Zealanders.

We found counsellors for the two survivors, and sought out legal advice where needed. We provided financial help to the families, to support basic needs like food and medical care. Perhaps most importantly, we checked in regularly with the distressed relatives – offering support and care in their darkest days.

“This was an horrific maritime disaster and our prayers go out to everyone involved. We’re always here for seafarers and families, not only in the daily challenges but also at times of great tragedy.”

Martin Foley, Chief Executive Officer





Hospitalisation and medical support

Despite all the precautions, Covid-19 inevitably reached seafarers and a number of crews were struck down with the virus. The worst affected were admitted to hospital.

Being hospitalised with a little-known virus is worrying enough, but when you're in a foreign land and far from home, the experience can be truly frightening. Visits from our chaplains and volunteers were a lifeline for seafarers.

Location: Montevideo, Uruguay

Issue: Hospitalisation

Date: March 2020

When a coronavirus outbreak hit the cruise ship Greg Mortimer, around 60% of the crew and passengers were struck down with illness. The ship, with its 128 holidaymakers and full crew team, had to quarantine in Montevideo, Uruguay, and a number of people were taken to hospital.

Our local chaplain helped the crew of the cruise ship, and ensured they were well supported in hospital before being repatriated.





Surviving the storm: our Covid-19 response

When the world shut down to stop the spread of Covid-19, seafarers kept going. And at Stella Maris, we kept going too. We quickly adapted our work so we could keep supporting seafarers and fishers in this challenging year.

Around 120 seafarers spent 150 days of lockdown living in our centre in Manila, in the Philippines, along with our chaplain and four staff. Most seafarers were returning home after serving up to nine months at sea, while the rest were starting contracts. Our chaplain ensured the seafarers were fed, engaged in regular activities and could stay in touch with their families.

Rodelito, a second engineer from the Philippines, who spent lockdown in our centre, said, "We pray always that God will give us support in this difficult situation, and I'm so very thankful to Stella Maris for providing us with food, a place to stay and a small amount of money."

“One thing I can say is that Stella Maris were always there for us. Nothing has been too much trouble.”

Gianmario, the captain of a ship stuck in Glasgow during 2020

How did we support seafarers within Covid-19 restrictions?

- Visits to gangways instead of on board
- Masses and other faith support live-streamed or emailed to seafarers around the world
- Deliveries of phone cards or supplies transferred via a bucket lowered over the side of the vessel!
- Increased use of social media and technology to stay in touch with seafarers



1,266

seafarers received food and toiletries from Stella Maris during the first lockdown in the Philippines.

891

seafaring families in the Philippines received support from us with food and living costs

Helping seafarers stayed connected with family was a top priority.

71%

of seafarers said Wifi units were vital.

400,000

seafarers stranded around the world, unable to get home.

69%

of seafarers suffered significant financial impact during the pandemic.

Almost

50%

of seafarers support three or more people with their income.

Top concern among seafarers in

2020

was feeding their families.

100%

of seafarers surveyed suffered mentally, emotionally or psychologically during 2020.





Non-payment of wages

Non-payment of wages remains one of the biggest issues for seafarers, and accounted for more than a quarter of all crisis cases we dealt with in 2020.

When a seafarer's wages are delayed or withheld, it has a devastating impact on the whole family – and places the seafarer under enormous stress.

Our network means Stella Maris can support crews from port to port, and if necessary track progress from our London office until the issue is resolved. Sometimes, our port chaplains can even settle a case of unpaid wages locally.

Location: Taiwan

Issue: Non-payment of wages

Date: April 2020

Our chaplain in Taiwan, Father Yance Guntur, was approached by a group of fishermen who said they had not received their full wages as specified in their employment contracts.

Fr Yance helped the crew fill out the paperwork and submit their documents to the Taiwan Fisheries Agency.

A week later, the fishermen had received their outstanding wages – and thanked Fr Yance for his intervention.

We dealt with

17

wage cases in 2020

We supported seafarers in

3

cases relating to working hours



Our chaplain in Taiwan, Father Yance Guntur





Piracy

Incidents of piracy and armed robbery increased by 25% in 2020 – up from 78 in the first half of 2019 to 98 cases in the first half of 2020².

It's a frightening statistic for seafarers, and a terrifying experience for those who are unlucky enough to fall victim.

Our chaplains supported seafarers in three piracy cases in 2020, and the care we provided was vital.

Location: Lagos, Nigeria

Issue: Piracy and kidnap

Date: September 2020

25%
increase
in piracy
between 2019
and 2020

A cargo vessel was on its way to Lagos when a warning cry rang out across the decks: "Pirates on board!"

The crew rushed to the citadel and barricaded themselves in. But the Russian captain and chief mate were on the bridge as the pirates boarded, and didn't have time to escape. The two men were kidnapped by the attackers.

Our Stella Maris team in Nigeria was contacted by local seafarer welfare groups. We were asked to visit the ship and provide support. As the vessel arrived in a Lagos terminal, our chaplains boarded to meet with each of the 16 seafarers, one to one.

"It was a horrific experience and seafarers explained that they'd been very frightened," said our chaplain. "They are gradually overcoming their fear and anxiety. The crew were elated that Stella Maris was able to reassure family members of their safety immediately after the incident."

"They also expressed delight that companies had sent welfare organisations to provide emotional and spiritual support to them."



²International Maritime Bureau



Access to shore leave

International law protects seafarers' rights to shore leave – but in 2020, Covid-19 impacted this dramatically.

Mindful of the risks of spreading the virus, some shipping companies were reluctant to allow seafarers to disembark in port. With governments closing borders around the world and port authorities applying strict rules to visiting vessels, seafarers often had little opportunity to rest and relax away from the noisy, industrial environment of the ship.

But, wherever possible, Stella Maris chaplains were on hand to help – and if there was a chance for seafarers to leave their vessel, we made sure they took it.

Location: Swansea, Wales

Issue: Shore leave

Date: June 2020

Representatives from Arklow Shipping contacted our chaplains to ask if we could help take their crew out for a day. Seven men were working on the Arklow Mill in dry-dock in Swansea, and needed to spend some time away from their vessel.

We sent two vehicles to transport the seafarers around the city, following social distancing rules. Our chaplain Fr Paul Osunyikanmi, based in Milford Haven, gave them a tour of the area and took them to the shops. He even provided the crew with gifts from his parishioners, and the men returned to their ship in good spirits.





Stress and mental health issues

Seafarers have always needed mental health support. But now, it's critical. These hardworking men and women are among the most resilient professionals in the world, but the challenges of 2020 tested many to the limits of their endurance.

Those at sea faced long, extended contracts with no end date, and constant worry about loved ones back home. Seafarers unable to get on board were consumed by financial concerns; if they're not at sea, they can't earn money. These were the brave frontline workers of the pandemic – but they paid a high price.

Support provided by our chaplains is vital to seafarers under pressure. We are the listening ear, the concerned friend, the independent source of advice and guidance. This relational, personal connection and care has never been more important.

Location: Glasgow, Scotland

Issue: Mental health and faith support

Date: November 2020

In times of crisis, faith becomes an increasingly important facet in helping people cope with stressful situations and improve their wellbeing. With Catholics disproportionately represented within the shipping industry we saw a big demand for faith support in 2020.

Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines recognised the significant contribution of faith to the wellbeing of staff, so invited our chaplain on board. Deacon Joe O'Donnell was able to arrange the celebration of Mass on a number of the company's cruise ships on long term moorings in Glasgow. This was hugely appreciated by the seafarers – and shows the positive impact of partnership between Stella Maris and maritime companies.



1.6
million
seafarers
serve on
internationally
trading
merchant
ships³

³International Chamber of Shipping

By partnering with
Stella Maris, you support
seafarers around the world,
Thank you so much.

To find out more about Stella Maris,
visit www.stellamaris.org.uk

Registered charity in England and Wales number 1069833.
Registered charity in Scotland number SC043085. Registered company number 3320318.



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