

The Mission to Seafarers Report

The Hawkes Bay Seafarers Welfare Society, which operates a centre near the entrance to the Port of Napier, is an inter-denominational venture supported by The Mission to Seafarers (Anglican), Apostleship of the Sea (Roman Catholic) and the Sailors' Society (with no denominational connections). The centre is manned by a team of volunteers from various congregations. The centre provides refreshments, recreational facilities, a currency exchange service and a shop selling mainly confectionary, soft drinks and souvenirs. The Port of Napier provides free wifi and telephone services to the centre.

Background

"Founded in 1856, today's Mission to Seafarers offers emergency assistance, practical support, and a friendly welcome to crews in 260 ports around the world. Whether caring for victims of piracy or providing a lifeline to those abandoned in foreign ports, we are there for the globe's 1.5 million merchant seafarers of all ranks, nationalities and beliefs."

Centre Visitors

From July 2014 to June 2015 there were 3198 visitors to the centre

From July 2015 to June 2016 there were 1921 visitors

From July 2016 to June 2017 there were 1585 visitors

From July 2017 to June 2018 there were 1931 visitors

From July 2018 to June 2019 there were 1415 visitors

These figures reflect the changing face of shipping – larger ships with fewer crew, shorter stays in port, and less opportunity for shore leave. Previously, contacting families required the provision of telephones and phone cards. Now, communication is generally provided on board by ship or port wifi. However, visitors still often use the centre's wifi to link to families via skype.

Ship Visits

Since the ill health and subsequent passing of the Reverend Richard Spence in 2016, no visits had been undertaken for over two years as there had been no-one available to take on the role. The Apostleship of the Sea in December 2018 appointed two volunteer visitors. In May they were joined by a third visitor, who is also a member of the Society's management committee. Visits to the end of June totalled 123.

Other support

The Rotary Club of Ahuriri Sunrise and All Saints parish Taradale organise Christmas parcels and gifts for seafarers on ships in port on that day. In honour of Richard Spence's service to the club, the club has continued to provide parcels – in association with Gail Spence.

Keith James

Secretary of the Society