

## Dear Supporters,

It's been a few months since you sent me out from my home ship to be a missionary aboard the mainland UK, so I thought it was about time I wrote you a prayer letter.



*Me with my fellow ushers, Colin and Tom, at a friend's wedding*

My first few months on land have been quite a challenge for me. I'm still getting used to the view from my porthole staying still, and not being able to stick magnets to the walls. There's a fair bit of work still to be done here before the country can move into full-time ministry, and I've got lots to learn first. So many things are different on land. For a start, the dress code is much stricter. I'm only allowed to wear my favourite jeans when I'm fixing a car, and I get told off if I have my work-shirt on when I go to the library. It turns out that a land-library is a place for keeping books, not fixing needle-guns.

I didn't really feel like a proper missionary until I found out that I had to sleep in a cabin all by myself. There is a nice big porthole, but the view is always the same, and there aren't even enough people in my house to set up a proper watch schedule. I wanted to ask the Director about this, but apparently she lives in a palace somewhere in London and I can't find her cabin-number anywhere.

I'm having trouble locating the Personnel department, too. When I asked about it I was directed to a dating agency, and I soon found out that they have very different SP rules. In fact, a lot of people – including Christians – won't think twice about going for a walk with a member of the opposite sex! Pray that I wouldn't be tempted to get into any conversations with girls outside of group situations.

When I signed up to be a land missionary I knew things would be primitive, but I wasn't expecting such a tiny 'kitchen' (that's the land word for galley). There's barely enough room to cook for a few friends, and I have no idea how I'm going to cope if I have to entertain a hundred local dignitaries. We have to make do with fresh milk which doesn't last more than a week, we only have one oven, and I especially miss having fridges large enough to hold secret meetings in.

I'm only just realising how much I took for granted back on the ship. On the mission field you can't just expect food and laundry to be provided for you. Some days on land I feel like I'm a galley shift-leader, a cleaning angel, a watch-keeper, an engineer and a carpenter all rolled into one!

The country is still very much in project mode, although once we get the carpet down it'll feel more like home. The bathroom only has one toilet, without a vacuum flush, and instead of a shower we use something called a 'bath' – it's like a giant sink, with separate hot and cold water taps, and you have to lie down in your dirty water to wash. That's not the only thing wrong with the bathroom either – we have to get our shower-gel, shampoo, shaving-cream, deodorant and toothpaste in separate bottles instead of using the all-in-one mixture like back home.

That's the other thing I can't get used to – money. I don't know if you've ever come across any on the ship - I only ever heard rumours of it during Prayer Night, before I came here. They use it everywhere! I still work, and eat, and sleep, and wash, and wear clothes, but now they give me money when I work, and then take it back when I pick up my cabin-keys, or when I get some bread or new shoes. The galley may be smaller, but Charlie, the Pantry and the Free Cupboard are all huge! They're called shops, and apparently they have different rules: You're not allowed to just borrow things, or help yourself to shoe-laces, and the first time I went into a Charlie I got in trouble with the duty officer for leaving some of my old clothes behind.

A funny thing happened to me the other day, actually: I mislaid a shirt in the laundry, and then I saw someone wearing the exact same shirt in the street a few weeks later. When I asked him where he'd found it and if I could have it back, he got quite cross and told me he buys all his clothes new! He must have a very supportive home ship, but he left before I could ask him about it.

Nothing could have prepared me for the sheer number of people in this place who don't wear their name badges. Like most missionaries, I've been on land-teams before, but only for a few days at a time, and always with a group of ship-people. Here, I see people I don't recognise every day, and I can't possibly get to know them all. Even the ones I do know, if I forget their names it's really embarrassing, because they won't be wearing a badge or a flag or anything. And it makes it harder to spot a Guest or a Visitor (though I've noticed they're usually the ones clinging tightly to maps and to the idea that British trains run on time).

We were thrown in at the deep-end a bit at the start – there was no real Pre-Land-Training, and I didn't even get a booklet of guidelines (eventually I just made up my own laundry day). When I arrived, I became part of a 'land-family', which is based on the ship-family, but it's organised slightly differently; instead of being assigned to a mature older couple, you're stuck with any old pair of locals who happen to give birth to you. It has its benefits, but there are lots of problems with this method; whole families will often come from the same country, and only speak one or two languages between them, which can make communication really boring.

Well, I think I've rambled on long enough. As usual, I'm grateful for all your prayers and support, and I'd love to hear from you all – not everyone is called to be a land missionary, but I'm sure God is able to use even ordinary people on ships to spread the Good News. The UK still has quite a bit of work to do before we get our own PSSC. I had hoped to be out of Europe long before now, but apparently there are some problems with our starboard anchor windlass, and, judging by today's weather, there may still be a few places where water can get in. So it looks like you'll be moving before we do. I very much look forward to your visit, and I'm sure you'll benefit greatly from our ministry. And don't forget to browse the shops and cafes – the income from our sales is what keeps this land ministry afloat.

With much love and blessings,

Anthony