



**BUILDING A
LONGER TABLE**
WELCOMING THE WORLD HOME
SEAFARERS INTERNATIONAL HOUSE



A Mission That Connects the World

For more than 150 years, Seafarers International House (SIH) has lived out a simple but profound calling:

To welcome the stranger.

Founded in 1873 in Lower Manhattan, SIH began as a ministry to seafarers and immigrants arriving in New York Harbor. Today, that mission continues—expanded, yet unchanged at its core.

Each year, SIH serves more than 19,000 individuals across six port cities, providing hospitality, advocacy, transportation, and pastoral care to:

- ➔ Seafarers who spend months at sea, often isolated and unseen
- ➔ Asylum seekers navigating fear, persecution, violence, displacement, and uncertainty

In a world that depends on the labor of both seafarers and asylum seekers—and often overlooks their humanity—SIH offers something essential:

Welcome. Safety. Dignity. A home.

A Homecoming 150 Years in the Making

Now, SIH is reviving a newly acquired home.

With the acquisition of the **property on Vesey Street in Lower Manhattan**, SIH reestablishes its presence near the very place where its ministry began.

This new SIH location is more than a building. It is:

- ➔ A home for those without one
- ➔ A place of rest between journeys
- ➔ A visible witness of compassion in the heart of New York City

Located steps from major transit lines, the World Trade Center, and New York Harbor, this space places SIH at the crossroads of global movement—where seafarers and asylum seekers arrive and new lives begin.

**This is not simply a relocation.
It is a renewed return to purpose.**

"I benefited greatly from Seafarer's International House. I stayed here when I did my coastguard exam, I stayed here when I got my first job when I came back and now, I'm staying here so it's hugely beneficial for me." – Jay Hinson, Seafarer





Seafarers International House (SIH) is the Lutheran response to the urgent needs of vulnerable seafarers and immigrants.



A Right-Sized, Mission-Centered Home

The Vesey Street property reflects a thoughtful evolution of SIH's ministry.

Rather than maintaining a larger, less flexible facility, SIH has intentionally secured a **right-sized home**—designed specifically to meet the needs of those it serves today.

FACILITY HIGHLIGHTS:

- ➔ Five-story building (~ 9,100 sq. ft.), elevator accessible and ADA compliant
- ➔ 16 guest rooms (private and shared accommodations)
- ➔ Space for small families
- ➔ Offices for staff and social services
- ➔ Community gathering areas and kitchen
- ➔ Space for seafarers' lockers
- ➔ Dedicated chapel/spiritual space

This new home allows SIH to bring lodging, care, and connection **under one roof**—in a way that is sustainable, efficient, and deeply human-centered.



"The most important thing that Seafarers gave me was hope."
– David Valdes, Asylum seeker

Why Ownership Matters

For the past 5 years, SIH has operated its lodging ministry in leased space.

While necessary, this arrangement experienced third party barriers that sometimes impeded mission effectiveness—especially for those most in need.

For example, guests in the leased space were required to present government-issued identification, a requirement that can exclude asylum seekers whose documents have been lost or taken by government agents during their journey. Now, SIH, in their own location, can also set up its own house rules and use discretion as needed.

Owning a permanent home changes everything.

It allows SIH to:

- Welcome guests without unnecessary barriers
- Provide care with dignity and discretion
- Integrate housing, social services, and pastoral care
- Operate sustainably without dependence on external restrictions

Ownership is not simply a financial decision. It is a mission mandate.

Mission in Motion: The Impact of a Permanent Home



▲ Pastor Marsh flanked by Rev. Susan Tjornehoj and a captain.

“So in some sense the two populations, seafarers and asylum seekers are unique, but they also share the fact that they are away from home.”

– Pastor Marsh Drege, SIH Executive Director

Every day, SIH meets people at pivotal moments:

- A seafarer between contracts, far from home
- A worker navigating exhaustion and isolation
- A person escaping violence and persecution
- A person persecuted because of their religion or sexual orientation
- An asylum family arriving with nothing but hope

In 2025 alone, SIH provided 3,749 **nights of lodging** to seafarers and asylum seekers.

With the new home on Vesey Street, SIH expects to expand that capacity to **more than 4,400 nights annually**, serving approximately:

- **150 seafarers**
- **30 asylum seekers, including families**

Overflow lodging for times of heightened demand can still be acquired elsewhere, as necessary. But this is not simply about increasing capacity.

It is about **deepening care**, strengthening stability, and ensuring that every guest is met with dignity.

“It’s home, they say for us home is where the anchor drops well that’s Seafarers International House for me.” – Chris Collins, Seafarer



Who We Serve

In New York, the majority of seafarers served with lodging are **American merchant mariners**:



Often ages
55–65



Working in lower
pay grades



Frequently without a
permanent home base

Others are younger mariners beginning their careers, navigating extended stays in one of the most expensive cities in the world while waiting for medical clearance Coast Guard validation and waiting for their next assignment. Seafarers are required to apply for their jobs at the nearby Union Hall in person.

For many, SIH is the difference between stability and uncertainty. For asylum seekers, SIH provides something even more urgent:

A first safe place to land.

Stories of Impact

“He told me it’s been difficult... a former crew mate had taken his own life. I just listened. That’s the whole point of these visits.”

During a ship visit, a seafarer shared the weight he was carrying—the loss of a colleague and the exhaustion of months at sea. What began as a simple visit became a moment of connection, conversation, and care.

In a world where seafarers are often invisible, SIH offers something rare:

Presence. Compassion. Humanity.



“They almost lost their lives crossing a river... now they are employed and building a new life.”

After a long and dangerous journey, an asylum seeker arrived in New York with no place to go. At SIH, she found a bed, guidance, and a path forward.

Within weeks, she secured employment and began building a new life.

What SIH provided was more than shelter.

It was a beginning.



A Safe, Accessible, and Resilient Home

SIH at Vesey Street is being renovated to ensure it is:

- ➔ **Accessible** to individuals with disabilities through ADA-compliant design
- ➔ **Resilient** in the face of climate-related disruptions and power outages
- ➔ **Safe and dependable** for guests at all times

These investments ensure that SIH can remain a place of refuge—no matter the circumstances.

Financial Overview

This project represents a bold and faithful investment in the future of SIH's mission.

Project Costs:

- ➔ Building Acquisition: \$5,400,000
- ➔ Renovation, Furnishings, Permits: \$4,000,000
- ➔ Contingency & Campaign Costs: \$100,000
- ➔ **Total Project Cost: \$9,500,000**

To secure this unique and ideal permanent home, SIH had to move quickly. We utilized reserve funds and secured a **\$4.9 million** loan to make the initial purchase possible with the required timing.

A central priority of this campaign will be to:

- ➔ Complete the renovation
- ➔ Retire the temporary loan
- ➔ Strengthen long-term sustainability

Gifts Needed to Cover the Total Project Costs

Gift Level	# of Gifts	Subtotal
\$2,000,000	1	\$2,000,000
\$1,000,000	1	\$1,000,000
\$500,000	2	\$1,000,000
\$250,000	4	\$1,000,000
\$100,000	10	\$1,000,000
\$50,000	14	\$700,000
\$25,000	24	\$600,000
\$10,000	45	\$450,000
\$5,000	65	\$325,000
\$2,500	85	\$212,500
\$1,000	100	\$100,000
< \$1,000	~50	\$112,500
Total	~401 Gifts	\$9,500,000

"As a community of faith we have the obligation and the opportunity to be a blessing and benefit to someone else." – Rev. Dr. Katrina D. Foster, Bishop, Metro New York Synod, ELCA





An Invitation to Lead

At this stage, SIH is engaging a small group of committed partners to help shape the future of this campaign.

Rather than announcing a public goal, we are first seeking to:

- Secure leadership gifts
- Build momentum
- Establish a strong foundation for success

Your leadership at this moment will:

- Reduce financial burden
- Inspire confidence among others
- Help define what is possible

This is not simply an opportunity to give.

It is an opportunity to lead.

Let the Welcome Continue

For more than 150 years, Seafarers International House has been a place where:

- The stranger becomes neighbor
- The weary find rest
- The unseen are seen
- We build a longer table, making room for all

Now, with a permanent home at 18 Vesey Street, that ministry will continue—stronger, more visible, and more enduring than ever.

Together, we can ensure that welcome continues.



"I invite you to join me in this niche small unseen ministry."

– Rev. Susan Tjornehoj, SIH President of the Board.

Building a Longer Table Campaign Chair:

Captain Richard Schoenlank

Building a Longer Table Steering Committee:

Capt. Willie Barrberre, Dcn. Sara Jane Baublitz, Conor Brooks, Eric Ebeling,
Mary Heller, Rev. E. Roy Riley, Andrew Steele, Rev. Margay Whitlock

SIH President of the Board: Rev. Susan Tjornehoj

SIH Executive Director: Rev. Marsh Drege

"Seafarers International House and the work they do every day—often quietly and always away from the spotlight. In 2025 alone, SIH made 1,347 ship visits, met with more than 14,000 seafarers, and provided transportation for shopping and medical services to nearly 1,900 mariners. With a staff as small as theirs, that level of outreach is truly remarkable."

*– Frederick "Fred" Finger, Senior Vice President for Fleet Strategy,
American Roll-on Roll-off Carrier Group (ARC); 2026 Outstanding Friend of Seafarers recipient*

"...because this work has never been theoretical. It has always been practical... That is why Seafarers International House matters. You provide more than support... you provide connection, dignity, spiritual support, and a reminder that every seafarer belongs to something larger than themselves: a family."

*– RADM John A. Okon, President, SUNY Maritime College and
2026 recipient of the Special Recognition for Service to Seafarers*

"Seafarers International House is doing vital, humane, indispensable work on behalf of mariners. And to me, there's no greater calling."

– Thomas "Tommy" Orzechowski, Jr., Secretary-Treasurer, Seafarers International Union of North America, 2026 Outstanding Friend of Seafarers recipient



Seafarers International House

An affiliate
of the



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

For more information or questions please contact:

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