

PORTCALL

Seafarers International House

MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: WILDERNESS WANDERINGS

I am writing this in the Christian season of Lent which is a time of wandering in the wilderness. Both the Old and the New testaments are full of allusions to the people of God facing danger, uncertainty, temptation, and seeming abandonment in the wilderness. The same can be said of the sea. It can, at times, feel like God is nowhere to be found.

And yet, there is something about the wilderness that strengthens and prepares us, distills our needs, and focuses our wandering spirits. There is something about the wilderness that reveals the very presence of God when we need it the most. We pray that this assurance of God's presence in our wanderings will be made manifest to those suffering in Ukraine.

As Charlotte Haberaecker of Lutheran Services of America said recently: ***"The wilderness was and is where God makes God's-self known and where healing and transformation take place. Healing and transforming people and communities is work that Lutheran social ministries do every day."*** Seafarers International House is part of the Lutheran Services in America network that serve one out of every 50 Americans daily - that is 6 million people! Imagine our 3 million-member Evangelical Lutheran Church in America providing twice its membership footprint through Lutheran schools, hospitals, nursing homes, social service agencies and, yes, through Seafarer international House's



work with seafarers and asylees, offering hope and presence to people who are in various journeys of the wilderness.

That is also to say that through Lutheran World Relief and Lutheran Disaster Response we partner in the reaction to the unspeakable devastation of the war on Ukraine. Through our world-wide advocacy for seafarers, we partner with Ukraine seafarers caught in the unfathomable trauma of both those who are stuck on embattled ships in the Black Sea and those who are seafaring far from their families while bringing us goods from around the globe.

Ships sailing out of Ukraine have been trying to dodge water mines and attacks. ***"I've been a shipbroker for more than 30 years and nothing in that time compares to the chaos we're seeing now,"*** said Halvor Ellefsen, a tanker broker at Fearnley A/S in Oslo.

One of our port chaplains in Newark, Luisito Destreza, reports that he has called on several ships recently that, ironically, have both Ukrainian and Russian crew that need to get along to get their jobs done. He says that he called on a vessel who had their first call here during the first week of March with a Ukrain-

ian captain and crew who were trying to fly home to their loved ones, but the Ukrainian government had to shut down all outbound and inbound flights. Chaplain Destreza quietly helped them with our Wi-Fi to connect with their loved ones in Ukraine and gave them prayers and encouragement. He also assisted two Ukrainians on the OOCL Seoul containership who were so disturbed and mentally blocked by the war in their homeland that they could barely function. Fortunately, our port chaplains at all of our sites have been available to listen and to pray with these very traumatized seafarers. ***There are 76,442 Ukrainian seafarers working today in the wilderness of trying to provide for their families through sailing while wishing they could be home to protect and defend their loved ones.***

On a much lesser scale, Seafarers International House continues to wander in the wilderness as we seek continued relocated space for our guesthouse and mission center. Indeed, may God make God's-self known in the wilderness wanderings that reveals the very presence of God when we need it the most. From our perspective as people of faith we have assurance that God always shows up in the wilderness and that Jesus' power is rooted confidently following the Spirit into the unknown. 

Marsh Luther Dreyer

PING PING PING

By Seafarers International House Port Chaplain Ruth Setaro, Port of New Haven, CT

It's amazing what connections to the internet and iPhones and all kinds of technical stuff can do that I don't understand. I do know that "WhatsApp" has really allowed seafarers to communicate and connect with me. Often, their time in the port of New Haven is short, so they contact me at all hours of the day, - even at 11 PM or 4 AM. That is why I sometimes hear *PING PING PING*, the sound of my cell phone alert, in my sleep. I don't mind.

Although many of the seafarers I meet in "my" port here in Connecticut have US visas and shore passes, it has remained to be shipping company policy that seafarers continue to be denied shore leave because of the danger of them contracting COVID-19. A sick crew cannot work, - and the ship cannot make money, - and so the ship continues to be a prison for so many.

And that is where I have been able to help a little. When I board a vessel, my Wi-Fi access allows them to shop online at Best Buy, Target, WalMart, and other stores. They also send me pictures of things that they would like to buy. Their lists include vitamins, detergent, toothpaste, body lotion, toilet paper, unlocked phones, wireless earphones, laptops, external hard drives, Apple watches, play station games, toys, cycle gear, hand and toe warmers, five 50 lbs. bags of rock salt for slippery decks, an espresso machine and coffee, chocolates, perfumes, Champion T-shirts, coffee mate, soy sauce, nuts, \$50 worth of Toblerone candy, and Doritos. Well, you get the picture.

Don't think that seafarers have a lot of money because they don't but hoping to come to the USA and not having had shore leave for so long, they have saved



their money and hoped to be able to get off the ship to shop not only for themselves but for their families at home. Sorry, not here.

So, *PING PING PING*, I have spent many hours shopping and I kiddingly tell the guys that they are certainly helping the American economy, but it is the look in their eyes when I deliver the things that they have asked for that makes it all worthwhile. "How can we ever thank you?" They ask. "What can we give you?"

The Chief Officer of the general cargo vessel Poland Pearl sat in the van with me one cold night. I told him to tell the

crew how grateful we are for the hard work they do and for the sacrifices they make to bring us 90% of all the things we need. That we recognize the hardship of being away from their families for months and months and the dangers they face.

"Thank you, ma'am," he told me, "No one ever tells us that and we are very grateful for your help. Everyone is happy, ma'am." We shared a hug and a prayer, a prayer for the Poland Pearl and the crew and a prayer for all seafarers. "Hope we come back to New Haven, ma'am."

PING PING PING bring it on... Ruth 



Top: The Crew of the Baker River really need toilet paper, - Ruth delivered!
Bottom: General Cargo ship Poland Pearl, photo VesselFinder.



At the October 6, 2021 Setting the Course Reception, left to right: Outstanding Friends of Seafarers awardees Donald "Don" Marcus (2014), Augustin "Augie" Tellez (2012), and Philip W. J. Fisher (2019); the 2020 awardees Steven Werse, Eric Ebeling, James Caponiti, and Timothy Ferrie with Marsh Drege, SIH board member Raymond Henderson, James Bast with past awardees David "Dave" Heindel (2003) and Enrico "Ricky" Esopa (2019). Photos by Henryk Behnke.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27, 5:00 - 7:30 PM

2022 SETTING THE COURSE RECEPTION

Since 2001, the annual Setting the Course event has been a major fundraiser and supports the Port Mission that served over 15,000 seafarers in 2020 (in a regular year over 30,000). All funds raised help provide for the salaries of five chaplains in the ports of Baltimore, New Haven, NJ & NY, and Philadelphia. Furthermore, funds support subsidized lodging for seafarers in Manhattan. Each year we honor shipping industry representatives who have significantly improved the welfare of seafarers.

Outstanding Friends of Seafarers:



Jacqueline Smith,
Maritime Coordinator, International Transportation Workers' Federation (ITF)

An ex-seafarer, Jacqueline joined the ITF in 2014. Prior, she led the Norwegian Seafarers' Union (NSU) and its 11,000 members for almost 8 years. Jacqueline became an active NSU member in 1992 as a shop steward, securing a collective bargaining agreement for concessionaires, a first for the union. Jacqueline has continued to ensure that seafarers internationally are covered by collective agreements and that they are upheld and enforced, as well as being committed to not losing national cabotage so national seafarers can continue to operate in their own waters.



Anthony Naccarato,
President & Chairman, American Maritime Officers Service

Anthony's career started in 1965 with Clipper Marine. Since he reached fifty-two (52) years of service in April 2022 going back to Ogden Marine in 1970, until today, semi-retired with Crowley Maritime. His total service to the maritime industry has surpassed fifty-seven (57) years. For 13 years, he has been employer Chairman of the Seafarers International Union and the American Maritime Officers Pension and Welfare Funds and of two state-of-the-art maritime training facilities, in Maryland and Florida, respectively. He has served on the SIU Trustee Board since 1978 and the AMO Board since 1984.



C. James Patti,
President, Maritime Institute for Research and Industrial Development (MIRAID)

For over 50 years, Mr. Patti has played an active leadership role in all major legislative efforts affecting the operation of U.S.-flag vessels and the employment of American mariners. From the preservation of the Jones Act, to the full enforcement of the nation's U.S.-flag cargo preference shipping requirements to the full funding of the Maritime Security Program, he has dedicated his efforts to keeping and creating jobs for American

mariners, making sure that government officials never lose sight of the critically important role mariners play in strengthening the economic, military and homeland security of our country.

Special Recognition for Service to Seafarers



Bethann Rooney,
Deputy Port Director at The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey
Ms. Rooney

manages all of the day-to-day operations of the nation's third-largest port. She serves on the International Standards Organization (ISO) Technical Committee (TC) 8 on Ships and Marine Technology. She is a two-time recipient of the U.S. DHS's Distinguished Public Service Award as well as the U.S. DOT 9/11 Medal. She was instrumental in developing programs and policies that afforded authorized crew no cost and easy access to shore leave as well as clergy and volunteers from the Port's seafarer welfare organizations access for ship visits. She has regularly participated in the Christmas at Sea Program. Most recently, she was instrumental in working with the NJ State Department of Health to get mariners access to the COVID-19 vaccine. ⚓

Tickets (\$500 pp): henryk@sihny.org or <https://www.sihny.org/upcoming-events>

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ALL THE SHIPS?

Henryk Behnke with excerpts (in italic) of the article by David A. Graham published in The Atlantic (google the title for the full article)

Author David A. Graham posed the question whether the global shipping industry is in distress given the latest accidents on sea.

Examples of that notion include the 656-foot car carrier *Felicity Ace* that caught fire in the Atlantic Ocean, off the Azores, on February 16, 2022, carrying 4,000 Volkswagen Group automobiles from Germany. The company is estimating that \$400 million worth of cars were aboard, including 1,100 Porsches and 189 Bentleys and unspecified numbers of Lamborghinis. The *Felicity* and its crew is very familiar to us at Seafarers International House since our chaplain in Baltimore regularly called on her. On February 18, we posted on social media that, thank God, the crew of 22 was rescued unharmed - and the abandoned vessel was towed with fire-fighters seemingly controlling the blaze. Yet, on the morning of March 1, the ship sank leaving environmental groups concerned about the pollution it will cause in the unique ecosystem of the Azores, where the seabed is covered with coral reefs, coral forests and sponges, home to sperm whales, blue whales, humpback whales, dolphins and sharks. This incident was widely covered in the news including ABC, Bloomberg News, New York Times, on NPR and in Washington Post.

Other disasters occurred in January this year when the container ship *Madrid Bridge*, on its way to the port of Charleston, South Carolina, lost about 60 containers at sea. Just a week later, an oil-storage vessel exploded off the coast of Nigeria. Within days, a Mauritian oil tanker had run aground off Reunion

in the Indian Ocean. In Peru, workers are still cleaning up a spill that, according to some accounts, occurred when a tanker was rocked by tsunami waves. Experts are nervously watching another tanker off the coast of Yemen, which is slowly disintegrating in the midst of a war and an existing humanitarian crisis. These days, we are worried about vessels in the Black Sea, off Ukraine, where several have already been the target of rockets since the war started.

As Graham reports, *these cases come just months after the spectacle of the Ever Given, a massive container ship that wedged itself into the banks of the Suez Canal, halted shipping for days, and enthralled a world bored to tears with the pandemic. These incidents are transfixing—a little awesome, in the old-fashioned sense, and a little hilarious, in a very contemporary internet-ironic one—but is the global shipping industry in some sort of collapse?*

*The short answer is no. "It's just that people have noticed," John Konrad, the CEO of the shipping site gCaptain, told David. Over the past few years, about 50 major ships have been lost annually. (Comprehensive figures from 2021 are not available yet, but Konrad said he doesn't see evidence of any big jump last year.) Most of the time, the public has no reason to pay attention to these sinkings and collisions. But supply-chain crunches caused by the pandemic have made the shipping system more visible than it has been for decades, spotlighting cases like the Felicity Ace and Madrid Bridge. Meanwhile, **more volatile weather caused by climate change and ever-larger container ships mean the risk of losses may be rising.***

Comparing figures provided by German insurance giant Allianz, Graham found



Felicity Ace. Photo courtesy Portuguese Navy

out that as recently as 2000, more than 200 big ships were lost. Yet in past years that number dropped to about 100 vessels per year, with "only" 48 lost in 2020 and 49 in 2021. Allianz attributes this to "the positive effect of an increased focus on safety measures over time, such as regulation, improved ship design and technology, and risk management advances."

Even so, that's a startling rate of one major ship lost almost every week. Most of them don't make the news. Though classified as "major," most of these ships are far smaller than the Ever Given or the Felicity Ace. Their crews also largely comprise seafarers from countries like the Philippines or India, the ships sink far away (the biggest portion of losses is around the South China Sea), and their cargo isn't something that Americans consumers miss. But when ships laden with things Americans care about, such as cars and cookbooks, ... they tune in.

In his article, Graham wondered: *The pandemic could be a factor in some of these recent accidents. Every link in the supply chain, from truckers to ports to shipboard crews, is subject to strain and fatigue. When the freighter Wakashio grounded off Mauritius in 2020, two crew members had been on board for more than a year, prevented from normal rotations onto shore and trips home because of quarantine rules.*

But two problems do seem to be growing: shipboard fires and containers going overboard, like the ones that sent the cookbooks to a watery grave. The reasons have nothing to do with the pandemic. First, **the size of vessels continues to grow, though the crews in charge of wrangling them stay the same size.** The Ever Given was one of the largest ships in the world when it launched, at 20,000 20-foot equivalent units (TEUs), a benchmark for container ships. One factor in its grounding was that the huge wall of boxes on board effectively acted as a sail, allowing the

wind to drive the ship into the canal's bank. But ships as large as 24,000 TEUs will soon join the fleet.

"Vessel size has a direct correlation to the potential size of loss," Allianz notes. "Car transporters/RoRo and large container vessels are at higher risk of fire with the potential for greater consequences should one break out."

Second, - Graham concluded - ships are also at greater risk of losing containers, or even sinking, when they hit unexpected storms. Climate change means that rather than being

confined to specific seasons, storms can hit at any time. "The weather is getting more unpredictable, and these ships are getting bigger, so they're stacking higher," Konrad said. "When the ships get hit in a wave, you get a bigger lever that's pulling the containers over." (In a bitter environmental irony, the *Felicity Ace* fire has kept burning because of lithium-ion batteries on electric cars.) In other words, the recent rash of high-profile shipping snafus may be only a factor of greater attention—but a warming planet means a mounting number of disasters might be just over the horizon. ⚓

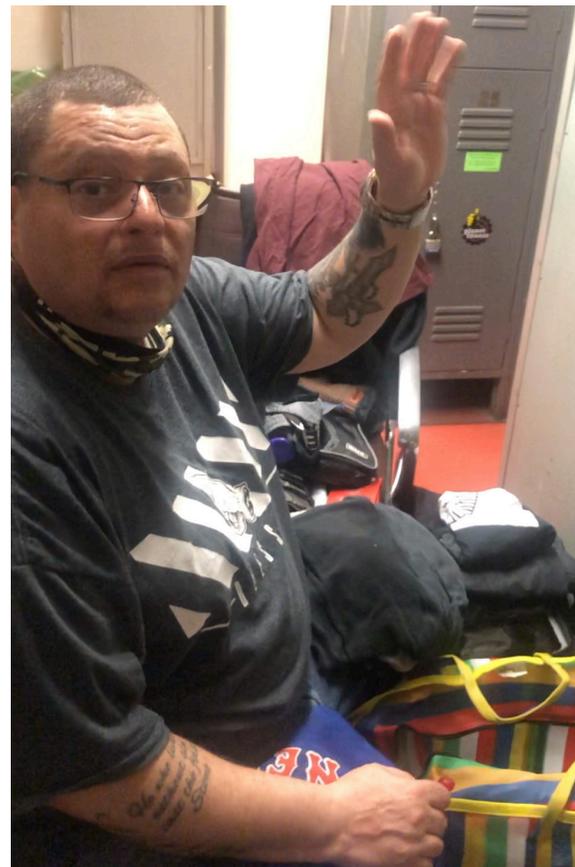
NAPHTALI - OR - WHY SEAFARERS NEED LOCKERS

By Rev. Marsh Luther Drege who also provided the photo of Naphtali at his locker (right)

This is Naphtali. He has been a seafarer for many years and when I see him I always say his name very clearly and broadly: NAPHTALI! I remind him that his name is Biblical, a brother to Joseph, and I remind him that I have directed the musical "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" a few times so I know a little about his namesake.

Seafarer Naphtali has a few things in common with Biblical Naphtali. Seafarer Naphtali has had to work hard during both famine and bumper years to provide for his family and likewise has often found himself living as a nomad between homes. By having a locker at SIH he has been assured that, wherever his story may take him, he has a consistent, stable place to keep his belongings. And like Biblical Naphtali, Seafarer Naphtali knows that God works for good despite set backs and challenges.

Over 60 seafarers have lockers at Seafarers International House. Yes, it has been a challenge to connect seafarers with their lockers during this pandemic and intermittent guesthouse closures, but somehow the belongings and the seafarers always get connected. All seafarers have Lucas or Jeni or me on speed dial and when they need access to their lockers, we are there to open the door for them and make sure they have access. At SIH we are committed to always providing a home away from home for our seafarers and their worldly goods. Because we know that being a nomadic seafarer is hard enough and having a place to keep valuables safe is not only a blessing - it's a necessity. ⚓



The lockers are one of many great aspects of Seafarers International House (SIH), second only to the amazing staff that will bend over backward to help a seafarer in need.

The two main benefits to lockers are convenience and money. The convenience and money are tied together a little for me because I fly into NYC to look for work from where I live in Louisiana. So being able to keep all of my sailing gear, two suitcases worth, in a locker makes flying so much easier and cheaper. It also relieves the stress of worrying where my gear is after 6-9 months at home. There are things I might need while staying in NYC that would make it hard to get on and off the ship so being able to store it in the locker is a huge help and makes my stay a lot more comfortable and easier. It feels like I have a small permanent spot in Seafarers International House and it kind of helps make it feel like a second home.

Sincerely, Randall Skillern, 2nd engineering officer M.E.B.A. Union

WHY I SERVE ON THE BOARD: “KEEP HOPE ALIVE”

By Seafarers International House Board Member Rev. E. Roy Riley, former ELCA Bishop of New Jersey

Looking for signs of hope is part of how I live. It's a function of my faith. It helps me to keep moving forward even when life circumstances are really challenging.

This is why I am committed to the mission of *Seafarers International House (SIH)*. In the last two years (2020-2021) *SIH* has continued to serve vulnerable seafarers and sojourners. To do that in the midst of a pandemic has required some courageous steps, including assigning our own hotel/ministry center to care first for those who were suffering from COVID-19, and then providing our center for housing people transitioning to a new chapter in their lives.

SIH's strategic plan had to change dramatically, but the commitment to ministry with seafarers and sojourners never wavered. Even without a home-base center, chaplains continued their work. Still they served ship crews through their visits, prayers, shopping assistance, and even vaccinations! SIH's ministry became more incarnational than ever. SIH staff adjusted to every new pandemic circumstance



Flanked by SIH supporters Ellie, left, and Jim Sudbrock, right, Roy is raising a glass to hope at the 2018 Right of Asylum Reception.

and stayed the course for the sake of ministry to the urgent needs of seafarers and sojourners.

In the midst of a pandemic, Seafarers International House became a renewed sign of hope in the world. I see it. I am committed to keep that hope alive. ⚓

GIVING HOPE - TO EACH OTHER

By Henryk Behnke

Last December old friends reunited. Some of our guests returned to meet up with their sponsors, who had visited them, while in detention and had later on



been around as former asylum seekers found their footing in their new homeland. There were lots of reasons to celebrate between the accomplishments of the new Americans and also gradual improvements to the immigration process.

With the reopening of immigration courts in New York City in July 2021, Seafarers International House was once again able to assist over 30 asylees with temporary accommodations. Grants from St. Peter's Fund for Special Ministry (Huntington, NY), an ELCA Hunger Grant, and major funding from Mother Cabrini Health Foundation enabled us to assist people from Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, the Middle East, Nicaragua, Nigeria, North Korea, and Slovakia. Our relocated site allowed us to care for an asylee along with his wife and two toddlers, - a whole family!

In 2022, we will continue to give hope to each other. In addition to assisting immigrants with accommodations, we will advocate for Temporary Protected Status, a form of immigration status provided to people of certain countries experiencing temporary conditions that make it difficult or unsafe to return. This could be a lifeline to the 34,000 Ukrainians currently in the United States. ⚓

Left: SIH sponsors and former asylum seekers meet to celebrate their friendship - giving hope to each other. Photo by Marsh Drege.

MISSION & PEOPLE SERVED

Seafarers International House (SIH) is the Lutheran response to the urgent needs of vulnerable seafarers and immigrants. SIH offers hospitality, social assistance, and advocacy to a multi-national and multi-faith community in maritime ports on the Eastern Seaboard and in New York City. During the second year of the pandemic, we served over 18,000 people including over 15,000 seafarers visited and over 1,300 lodging nights provided for seafarers and immigrants. SIH provides its services to all people regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, or family/parental status.

We are making the most of your contributions: 80% of our revenue is spent on programs, only 20% on administration and fundraising.

PLAN RETIREMENT TO HELP OTHERS

You may remember the need of seafarers and immigrants in your estate planning. Just name Seafarers & International House, Inc. as a beneficiary of your 401(k), IRA or other qualified retirement plan. All you have to do is sign a paper or online form from your plan administrator and designate Seafarers & International House, Inc. (Federal ID: 13-5562413) as a full, partial or contingent beneficiary.

You can also join our Lighthouse Keeper monthly automated giving program to reliably support our work with seafarers and immigrants by making modest monthly donation that add up and help us provide excellent service. Just click the donate button on our website (www.sihnyc.org) and choose your amount and frequency.

For assistance please contact Henryk Behnke, Director of Development & Communications. You can reach him at (212) 677-4800 ext. 7203 or henryk@sihnyc.org. If or when you have included us in your

estate plans, please let us know. We'd love to welcome you into the Homeport Society or as a Lighthouse Keeper and will list you in the annual report. 



Former SIH Board President and Homeport Society Member Rev. Margay Jo Whitlock with those she cares for at Seafarers International House.

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In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Seafarers International House is temporarily closed to the public. We do receive your mail. Please check www.sihnyc.org for updates or email your inquiry to res@sihnyc.org or call us at (212) 677-4800.

If you are a seafarer with a valid MMC in need of accommodation in Manhattan or other assistance, please email res@sihnyc.org or call us at (212) 677-4800. If you need to access mail or your locker please make an appointment at least 24 hours in advance.

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Captain Florian Boettger of the Dublin Express receives Chocolate Easter Bunnies for his crew from German-speaking Port Chaplain Arnd Braun Storck in April 2020. Besides fulfilling shopping orders, these days our port chaplains also assist seafarers with booster shots.

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America 

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