

# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

## Seafarers International House

### MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: A Homecoming for Prisoners of Hope

*Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope; even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you.*

Zechariah 9:12

Dear friends of Seafarers International House (SIH):

In February 2024, a report released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found that refugees and asylees have generated tens of billions of dollars more in local, state, and federal tax revenues over the last 15 years than they have cost in direct government services — ultimately representing a net fiscal gain at all levels of government. (See text box for details).\*

And yet, throughout 2025 and especially today, many refugees and asylum seekers are being threatened with deportation and imprisonment. As SIH board member Ralie Deffenbaugh reminds us, in September 2025, the Council of Churches in Namibia convened an event titled “we are prisoners of hope,” which drew parallels between Namibia’s historical struggle for liberation and the current plight of refugees and asylum seekers. The phrase is based on Zechariah 9:12 and has historically been used by leaders like Bishop Zephania Kameeta and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. What a powerful connotation.

Here at SIH, we have been charting a course toward a grand Homecoming — a return to a new home through the purchase of a property in downtown Manhattan. Just a stone’s throw from our original site in 1873, this new space will become a true home away from

home for asylum seekers and seafarers, many of whom are “prisoners of hope.” Within these walls, our guests will find safety, welcome, and the assurance that they have reached a secure harbor.

During 2026, we will begin renovating this right-sized mission building, creating 16 guest rooms and community space to accommodate both small asylum-seeking families and individuals, as well as visiting seafarers. With these improvements underway, we are looking ahead to opening our doors in early 2027, ready to offer refuge and rest to all who arrive.

Parallel, we will be launching a comprehensive campaign to pay for the renovations, reduce the burden of a loan for the new building, and strengthen our services to seafarers and asylum seekers. We will keep you posted in the months to come.

In April 2025, we had a most successful Setting the Course reception thanks to the generosity of our honorees Susan Winfree, Willie Barrere, and notably Robert Sappio, - and their friends. The boost in event support enabled us to expand our services through a partnership with the Houston International Seafarers Center with our port chaplain Pastor Tammy Sharp in that busy port in the Lone Star State.

Thus, we continued a robust port mission in now six ports with nine port chaplains and ship visitors, and a fleet of six vans that we use to visit ships and to transport seafarers. In the summer and fall, volunteers from the Propeller Club, congregations, board members,

#### MISSION

*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 the Ports of Albany, Baltimore, Duluth, Houston, New Haven, and New York & New Jersey, and in New York City.**

and individuals helped us assemble satchels. These efforts paid off with 3,405 Christmas-at-Sea satchels delivered to seafarers connecting donors with seafaring “prisoners of hope” who experienced the joy of Christmas.

In 2025, we served 19,519 people including 19 asylum seekers we welcomed providing them with shelter, food, and social work assistance; a far cry from the 33 and 49 in 2024 and 2023 respectively because asylum seekers are fearful of coming out of the shadows. Obviously, the curtailment on asylum seekers has had its effect.

With these positive 2025 highlights in mind, perhaps we are all “prisoners of hope” in that as we are bound together in despair, we are also bound together in hope that will not leave us imprisoned.

*“For I know the plans I have for you” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

Jeremiah 29:11

Peace,



*Marsh Luther Drage*  
Pastor and Executive Director

\* From 2005 to 2019, refugees and asylees paid a total of \$123.8 billion more in taxes than they cost in government services, for a net fiscal gain of \$31.5 billion to the federal government and \$92.3 billion to state and local governments combined. Refugees and asylees paid an estimated \$363 billion to the federal government through payroll, income, and excise taxes, and \$218 billion to state and local governments through income, sales, and property taxes. Even when factoring in their spouses and children under 18, many of whom are U.S. citizens, refugees and asylees still provided a net fiscal gain, costing \$723.4 billion in government services yet paying \$739.4 billion in tax revenue, for a net gain of \$16 billion.

# 2025 Program Impact

**19,519** immigrants and seafarers directly benefited from SIH's services (up from 19,066)

**2,351** lodging nights (up from 2,225) provided to 139 seafarers in Manhattan.

**14,078** seafarers were visited and counseled (up from 13,556) on 1,347 vessels, receiving essentials they requested.

**1,878** seafarers were transported to a mall or medical facilities.

**3,405** seafarers, regardless of faith, received Christmas-at-Sea satchels filled with warm clothing and holiday greetings to spread joy beyond borders and oceans.


**19** asylum seekers received free lodging for a total of 1,328 nights. They hailed from Angola, Cameroon, Chile, Cuba (3), Haiti (5), Nigeria, Peru, Ukraine, and Venezuela (5). See map below.



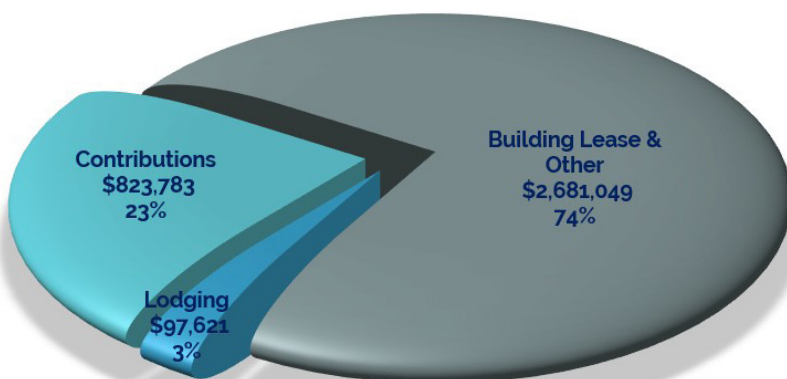
## 2025 FINANCIAL REPORT

In accordance with our 2024 - 2028 strategic plan, operating gains continued to help build reserves for the purchase of the new right-sized mission headquarters (\$1M). These gains also allow for capital repairs on the guesthouse (\$324,806), which is leased to Breaking Ground, a NYC-based non-profit which provides transitional housing to the community.

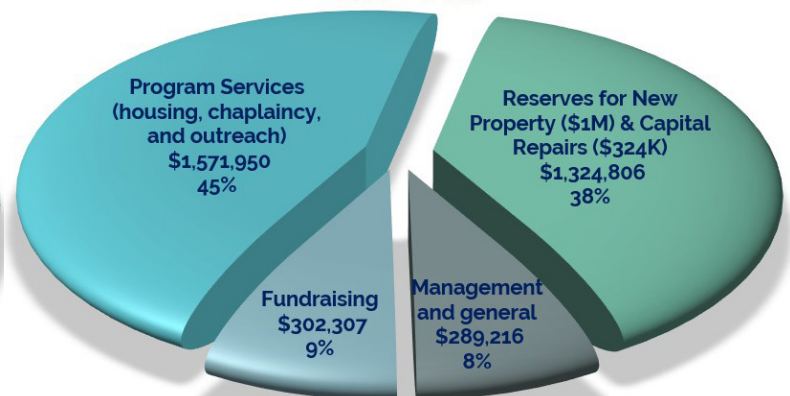
Lease revenue needs to be augmented by donations to support our services and the purchase and renovation of our new home starting in 2026. Program services and reserves accounted for 83% of expenses with only 17% spent on management and fundraising. These figures reflect unaudited revenue and expenses and are subject to change.

To request the audited 2025 financial statements please send an email to [henryk@sihnyc.org](mailto:henryk@sihnyc.org). 

### Operating Revenue 2025 (pre-audit) \$3,602,453



### Operating Expenses & Reserves for New Property 2025 (pre-audit) \$3,488,279





# GIFTS IN MEMORY OF

**Zoia K. Foster** † by Bishop Rev. Dr. Katrina D. Foster and Pamela Kallimanis

**Jacob Henry** † by Don Henry

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**James Alex Bishop** †  
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Henryk Behnke



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Henryk Behnke



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**Giuseppe De Matola** †  
by an anonymous supporter



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by Dr. Ann Siegle Drege  
and Rev. Marsh Drege  
Sterling Gilreath and  
Henryk Behnke



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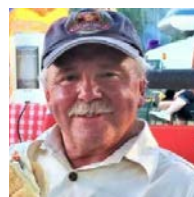


**Stanley Wyatt and Joan Moore** †  
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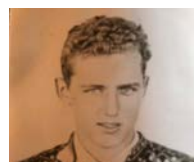
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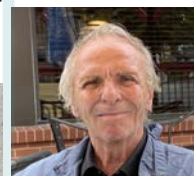
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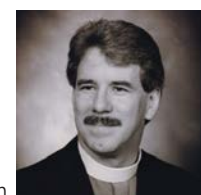
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Rev. Marsh Drege  
Heidi Helstrom  
Kristina and Brian McVeigh  
Howard Ross  
Ouliana and Ralf D. Wiedemann



**Robert Paul Wilkinson** †  
by Kevin Gowen



**Rev. William Eugene Zimmermann** †  
by Cindy Zimmermann



## GIFTS IN HONOR OF

### *All the Kind Folks Who Work At Seafarers International House and Leaders and Volunteers*

by Karen Skullerud  
Rev. Jeanne Rineer Warfield  
and Sheldon P. Warfield

#### *Asylum Seekers*

by Michael Edward Declement

#### *Henryk Behnke*

by Dayna and Conor P. Brooks

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#### *John Swedberg*

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#### *Womenwearingthepants.org*

by Robert Carroll



## LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS

Lighthouse Keepers make recurring donations that provide a reliable income stream to support vulnerable people in need.

- Barbara Anderson
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- Henryk Behnke & Sterling Gilreath
- Stephen Bennett and Brooke Badley
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- Aiesha and Andrew Steele
- Joan E. Worrall
- Guan Yang



## HOMEPORT SOCIETY

Members of the Homeport Society have included Seafarers International House (SIH) in their retirement and legacy plan by listing SIH in their will or making SIH a beneficiary of a life insurance policy or a qualified retirement plan. They leave a legacy of care for the stranger.

- Barbara Anderson
- Henryk Behnke & Sterling Gilreath
- Susan Smyth Bell
- Paul K. Erbes
- Dr. Ann Siegle Drege and Rev. Marsh Luther Drege
- Pauline and Harry Forse
- Caryl M. and Rev. Mark A. Grorud
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- Ralph Urban Price (1931 - 2025)
- Betsy and Rev. E. Roy Riley
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- Jill and John Scibilia
- Rev. Susan E. Tjornehoj and Rev. David Wangaard
- Laura and Hans Vogel
- Carolyn and Edward Wagner
- Rev. Margay Jo Whitlock



Because of privacy concern, we cannot publish a photo of asylum seekers. Instead we share this image of people who might have been guests long ago: Immigrants on a steamer passing the Statue of Liberty. From Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, July 2, 1887. US National Parks Service.



# CHRISTMAS-AT-SEA: A HOLIDAY INITIATIVE

**3,405** seafarers received Christmas at Sea satchels filled with warm clothing and holiday cheer. On their behalf, thank you to all participants, donors, Amazon Wish List contributors, and knitters. (If you are not listed here, please check the donor list on the following pages):

Cheryl Acker  
 Mariline S. and Miguel A. Alicea  
 All Saints Lutheran Church, Piscataway, NJ  
 Amazing Grace Lutheran Church, Florham Park, NJ  
 American Maritime Officers  
 The American P&I Club  
 Ruben Anderson  
 Anonymous  
 Henryk Behnke  
 Susan Smyth Bell  
 Bensalem Senior Citizens Center  
 Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Fairport, NY  
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 Margay Whitlock and friends  
 Peter John Wirth  
 Woman's Seamen's Friend Society of CT  
 Joan Worrall  
 Hanne Wulp  
 Zion Lutheran Church, Baltimore, MD  
 Zion Lutheran Church (WELCA), Renovo, PA  
 Zion Lutheran Church, Saddle River, NJ



We are grateful to all volunteers and donors including this group with Pastor Sarah Garrett Krey (on the right) from Gloria Dei! Lutheran Church in Arnold, MD. Photo by SIH's port chaplain Rev. Vitalii Guz, December 2025.

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Thank you for welcoming  
19,519 strangers and helping  
them in their need.

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