

# PORT CALL

Harbor of Hospitality



Seafarers International House

Summer 2017

## Looking Ahead:

### Right of Asylum

Mission Reception  
Tuesday, October 17, 2017  
Battery Park Restaurant  
Honoring

#### Nisha Agarwal

Commissioner  
New York Mayor's Office of Immigrant  
Affairs

and

#### Ninette Kelley

Director, New York Office,  
UN High Commissioner for Refugees

Reservations or Information:  
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## Seafarers International House

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Seafarers International House serves seafarers and immigrants with pastoral care, hospitality, social assistance, advocacy and prayer in the ports in Baltimore, Philadelphia, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut and Rhode Island, and in an 84-room Guesthouse in Manhattan.

## Back Wages

Accepting a job offer ashore is usually pretty straightforward. You know how much and how often you'll be paid. You'll know right away if you're not being paid, and you can quit, take another job and still collect your back wages and sometimes even liquidated damages.

If you're a seafarer, it's not that simple. The bulk of your wages are sent home, and it may be months before you realize that you're not being paid. When you make this discovery, you can't just quit in the middle of the ocean or at a foreign port and look for another job. And even if you could leave, you probably don't know where or against whom to file your lawsuit. You are without a paddle!

Since 1948, the ITF<sup>1</sup> has campaigned against FOC ships, and to that end, in 1971, organized the ITF Inspectorate, consisting of 128 inspectors in 57 countries. This network of men and women from affiliated unions (i) assists seafarers with their claims against ships, whether or not they have ITF contracts; (ii) secures contracts on FOC vessels not already covered; (iii) polices existing agreements for compliance and (iv) promotes solidarity between seafarers and dockers.<sup>2</sup>

Sadly, the incidence of back wages is staggering. Last year

alone, the ITF Inspectorate was called upon to inspect 10,273 ships, during the course of which they uncovered and assisted in the collection of over \$42 million.<sup>3</sup> This is thought to be "a drop in the bucket", say 5%, and that means that a segment of the largely FOC shipping industry made an illicit profit of \$840 million off the backs of its seafarers.

Generally, ship supplies and provisions are paid on or before the ship sets sail, and insurance can be terminated within short grace period after nonpayment

to pay seafarer wages for two months or longer and requiring shipowners to obtain insurance or other financial security to cover the cost of back wages as well as maintenance and support (i.e. food and water) and repatriation (i.e. an airplane ticket back home), which cannot be terminated without thirty days' prior notice to the ship's flag state.

If the insurance is canceled before a claim can be filed, the seafarers' protection evaporates. The better practice would be to lengthen the required notice to ninety days and publish it so port state authorities could detain the uninsured ship.

The \$42 million backwages were not collected from bankrupt owners.

They were collected from over-leveraged ship owners for whom the payment of other debts was far more im-

portant than wage payments to seafarers. For these folks, more severe penalties and forfeitures may be needed.



*"Would you like to come to sea for a year and work for me? What — you would also like to get paid? How is a shipowner to make a living these days? Forget it — I can find people who will work for free."*

of premiums. Only the seafarer is exposed to an indefinite non-payment of amounts owed.

Admittedly, the recent financial security amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 protect the seafarer by defining "abandonment" *inter alia* as the shipowners' failure

1. International Transportation Workers Federation, London

2. David W. Heindel (Secretary - Treasurer, Seafarers International Union of North America and Chair, ITF Seafarers' Section), *Before Climbing Aboard*, Presentation at the NAMMA Conference in New Orleans, August 9, 2017

3. Ibid

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## Worshipping with Asylum Seekers

Last July 12<sup>th</sup> Presiding Bishop Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton and an entourage from the ELCA Churchwide Office and other church bodies were invited by Rev. Ramon Collazo of Santa Isabel Lutheran Church in Elizabeth, NJ to join in the worship services he leads twice a week, one for the men and one for the women, detained at Elizabeth Detention Center. Most are Latino and African, and the services are conducted in both Spanish and English, with Rev. Collazo seamlessly translating from one language to another.

Rev. Collazo began the worship service with introductions and the call to worship. Two of the asylum seekers read the Old and New Testament lessons. Bishop Eaton and Rev. Mark M. Beckwith, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Newark, delivered messages of hope and assurance in God's presence for all people in all places – even those about to be deported back to their homelands. The services were highlighted by the Sharing

of the Peace and special prayers for a worshipper who had just learned that her brother had been executed in the homeland from which she had escaped.

After the worship service, the visitors and the detainees circulated in small groups to exchange greetings, stories, well-wishes and hope. Life in immigrant detention centers is terribly isolated, and it would be difficult to overstate just how important these occasional visits are to the immigrants' well-being.

The worship services provided a study in the stark contrast between the foreboding warehouse for over 300 immigrants and the humble and gentle folk seeking asylum, who are housed there.

Against the grim surroundings, the asylum seekers at EDC are incredibly grateful for even the smallest gestures they receive, namely worship services from Rev. Collazo and others and weekly visits to detainees and appearances at their courtroom

hearings by volunteers from Seafarers International House, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Florham Park, NJ and other local agencies and church groups.

It is difficult to reconcile the words of Emma Lazarus ("huddled masses yearning to be free . . . my

lamp beside the golden door") with the Government's obsession with detention and travel bans.

It is not clear whether the Government will even consider requests for asylum in the future.

If and when the asylum seekers are granted asylum, Seafarers International House provides lodging and, along with other agencies, social services for these "asylees" at its Guesthouse in New York City. For most of them, this represents their first refuge and freedom after long and difficult treks spanning months and years. They remain at the Guesthouse between three weeks and three months, until they become acclimated, get jobs and find their own apartments.

Last year, Seafarers International House's volunteers visited over 350 asylum seekers, provided social services to 23 asylees and 805 nights of free lodging in its Guesthouse. All of these folks have successfully transitioned to independent, productive lives in various communities throughout the country. They are goodhearted, hardworking people, who finally found a golden door opened for them in their newly adopted homeland.

Bishop Eaton has stated that the church is called to welcome the stranger and to walk alongside vulnerable refugees living in untenable situations. Temporarily banning vulnerable refugees will not enhance our safety nor does it reflect our values as Christians.<sup>1</sup>

1. Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, *Letter on Refugee and Immigrant Executive Order*, January 30, 2017



Left-Right, Rev. Stephen M. Bouman, Director, ELCA Congregation and Synodical Mission Unit; Christopher V. Roehrer, Seafarer International House Director of Development and Communications; Rev. Mark M. Beckwith, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Newark; Patricia A. Roehrer, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (Florham Park NJ), Visiting Volunteer; Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, ELCA Presiding Bishop; and Alice and Martin Schwartz, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (Florham Park NJ), Visiting Volunteers

## NAMMA Conference 2017



Rev. Marsh Luther Drege, Pastor and Executive Director (and reelected NAMMA President for a 2<sup>nd</sup> three-year term)

Each year, port chaplains can attend the North American Maritime Ministry (NAMMA) Conference for worship, support and continuing education. At this year's conference in New Orleans all but one of our seven port chaplains from Seafarers International House were able to attend. A few highlights:

- Our friends at the ITF assist seafarers in settling claims against vessels, both with and without ITF labor agreements. Last year, they recaptured over \$40 million in back wages wrongfully withheld from seafarers.

- The 2017 Shore Leave Survey of many ports, terminals, ships and 9,000 seafarers uncovered that in just one week, over 900 seafarers were denied shore leave for want of a visa,

even though international treaties stipulate that "crewmembers shall not be required to hold a visa for the purpose of shore leave". As port chaplains, we continue to hold ship owners, ship agents

and the Government responsible for disregarding the seafarer's right to shore leave, aggravated by the recent travel ban from six countries.

- Since 2006, the cruise line industry has asked Congress to enact laws that would deprive foreign seafarers on cruise ships of their rights to medical care in the United States. Once again, thanks to a robust letter signing campaign to Congress by port chaplains this past month, the cruise industry's lobbying effort was unsuccessful. We must, however, remain vigilant.

- Chaplaincy is one of the most stressful and poorly paid jobs. We learned the importance of

caring for the caregiver to prevent compassion fatigue.

We worshipped together in the historic St. Louis Cathedral in New Orleans (pictured below), the oldest Catholic cathedral in continual use in the United States. We heard the Archbishop preach about the blessings of seeing those who are often invisible—those working on the sea, on the docks, and in allied industries. Hymns were sung and prayers were offered by port chaplains from many parts of North America and many religious denominations, worshipping as one. No one is an island. No one stands alone.

Blessings,

*Marsh Luther Drege*



## Too Hot To Handle?

Ammonium nitrate is used as a fertilizer. Mixed with fuel, ammonium nitrate becomes an explosive. In large quantities, it may explode on its own. It's a dangerous cargo.

Last August 14<sup>th</sup>, a chemical fire broke out in a cargo hold of the M/V CHESHIRE, a British-flagged bulk tanker just off the coast of the Canary Islands. The ship was loaded with 40,000 tons of ammonium nitrate. By contrast, the 1947 Texas City disaster was caused by the explosion of just 2,000 tons of ammonium nitrate on the SS GRANDCAMP.<sup>1</sup>

Temperatures in the hold

rose high enough to buckle the CHESHIRE's hatch covers.

The prevailing winds were too light to carry the fumes from the fire away from the wheelhouse, creating a navigation hazard as well as a dangerous situation for the 24 seafarers aboard. The CHESHIRE's hull reportedly was too hot for the crew to be evacuated by tug, and the Spanish Coast Guard instead evacuated them by helicopter and brought them safely to shore. All are reported to be in good health.<sup>2</sup>

There was speculation that were the bulker to drift toward the coastline, the ship might

have to be scuttled to avoid a cataclysm ashore.<sup>3</sup>

The CHESHIRE has been towed to anchorage off the Canary Islands, and representatives of the cargo manufacturer have been advising on cooling the cargo. All the seafarers were flown home, except the second engineer, who assisted the salvors.

1. Mikhail Voytenko, *Largest*

*Non-Nuclear Bomb Afloat?* FLEET MON, August 20, 2017

2. *Fertilizer Fire Leaves Bulker Adrift*, MARITIME EXECUTIVE, August 16, 2017

3. Voytenko, op cit



## FOCS and Cabotage

Cabotage has been in the news lately.

Last June 4<sup>th</sup> the ITF held its first cabotage conference, noting that 136 countries around the globe have cabotage provisions, most of which are under attack.

Then last July 13th, Senator John McCain introduced a bill to repeal the Jones Act.

What's it all about? "Cabotage" is defined as trade or transport in coastal waters or airspace or between two points within a country. Cabotage laws restrict that trade or transport to the

cabotage laws undermine free markets and obstruct international trade, Jones Act advocates cite 500,000 maritime jobs that are sustained by the Jones Act, each of which indirectly supports another 4-5 jobs, plus other beneficial ripple effects.

Jones Act advocates also argue that U.S. flag ships are critical to national security, providing the country with militarily useful ships and experienced crews to national defense sealift needs, that could not be assured with foreign flag vessels.

Lastly, Jones Act advocates muse that U.S. merchant mariners serve as the eyes and ears on our waterways against maritime terrorism.

Since Seafarers International House serves a multi-national (and multi-faith) community of seafarers, it might

be expected to be neutral on the issue of cabotage. On the other hand, the reality is not far from what Dave Heindel, Chair of the ITF Seafarers' Section, described as the "race to the bottom" to recruit the most exploited workers in the world.<sup>2</sup>

The four largest FOC registries are Panama, Liberia, Marshall Islands and Hong Kong, and alone, they represent 57.8% of the world fleet. The nationality of the officers and crew is of no consequence under Panama<sup>3</sup>, Liberia<sup>4</sup>, Marshall Islands<sup>5</sup> or Hong Kong<sup>6</sup> maritime laws.

How exploited are seafarers on FOC ships? It varies. Some FOC ships are better run than

others. Nevertheless, FOC ship operators typically recruit seafarers from countries with the lowest wage rates and the lowest expectation of decent wages and fair treatment. It should be no surprise then that nearly 70% of the world's active seafarers hail from Philippines, Russia, India, Ukraine, China, Turkey, Indonesia, Poland, Greece and Myanmar.<sup>7</sup>

By contrast, the largest number of beneficial owners of merchant vessels hail from Greece, Japan, China, Germany and South Korea.<sup>8</sup>

There is very little correlation between the nationality of the ship's registration, the ship's crew and the ship's beneficial owners. This lack of correlation is at the heart of the ITF's FOC campaign.<sup>9</sup>

On the one hand, global trade is viewed as key to ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity. Countries open to international trade tend to grow faster and provide more opportunities to their populations.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, an increase in global trade is accompanied by an increase in intranational inequality, such as the rise of sweatshops, Chinese "princelings," and Indian billionaires.<sup>11</sup> One might add blacklisted seafarers, unscrupulous ship owners and hedge fund managers. All too often, the global trade mantra of free trade and deregulation leads to unnecessary abuse and exploitation of labor. Indeed, the promulgation of a host of international maritime treaties (SOLAS, MARPOL, ISPS, STCW and MLC 2006) belies the notion that business enterprises don't need government regulations to act responsibly.

Possibly the largest flaw in Sen. McCain's argument against the Jones Act is that out of 41,674 merchant ships in the world fleet, only 169 are U.S. flagged. Four-tenths of one percent is hardly impacting U.S. business or international trade.

Admittedly, nationalism can breed (and more recently has bred) hate, discrimination and vilification of foreigners, but it also has the capacity to forge a sense of unity, purpose and responsibility among the people of the nation<sup>12</sup>, and that's not all bad.

1. Editorial, *Should The Jones Act Be Repealed?*, GCAPTAIN, August 9, 2017

2. *ITF Slams Australia's Coastal Shipping Reform Plan*, WORLD MARITIME NEWS, April 6, 2017.

3. [www.panamamaritimelawyers.com/vessel-registry](http://www.panamamaritimelawyers.com/vessel-registry)

4. [www.maritimeliberia.com](http://www.maritimeliberia.com);

5. [www.shipregistrationagency.com/flag-states/marshall-islands](http://www.shipregistrationagency.com/flag-states/marshall-islands)

6. [www.mardep.gov.hk/en/pub\\_services/exam1.html](http://www.mardep.gov.hk/en/pub_services/exam1.html)

7. *Comparison of U.S. and Foreign-Flag Operating Costs*, U.S.. Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration, September 2011

8. *Review of Maritime Transport 2014*, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

9. [www.itfseafarers.org/FOC\\_campaign.cfm](http://www.itfseafarers.org/FOC_campaign.cfm)

10. *Trade Overview*, THE WORLD BANK, [www.worldbank.org/en/topic/trade/overview](http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/trade/overview)

11. John Cassidy, *The Good (and Bad) News About Poverty and Global Trade*, THE NEW YORKER, October 6, 2015

12. *The Rise of Nationalism and Protectionism*, TWO-SIDED VIEWS, November 14, 2016, <http://twosidedviews.com>



country's maritime community. The Jones Act, for example, restricts United States coastal trade (including Hawaii and Alaska) to U.S. registered ships, built in U.S. shipyards and manned by U.S. crews. The Jones Act and other cabotage laws are justified on the basis of economic security and national security.

Sen. McCain and many ship owners and operators argue that the Jones Act is an antiquated and protectionis law that forces shipowners to "build American and hire American" when instead they could build ships in China and hire Chinese crews to operate those ships.<sup>1</sup>

While opponents argue that

Christopher V. Roehrer, Director  
Development and Communications

## Ascension Day Worship

The M/V KAMBOS, a Panama flagged bulk carrier, arrived in the Port of Baltimore in mid-May to unload a cargo of sugar at the Domino Sugar Plant. Rev. Bob Schmitt, our port

chaplain visited the ship and learned that the Filipino captain and crew hadn't been able to worship for over ten months.

Fortunately, Ascension Day was just around the corner, and on that following May 25<sup>th</sup>, he led worship, inviting the captain to read the lessons from the Book of Acts in the Tagalog language of the Philippines. Fol-

lowing the service, our port chaplain was invited to join the captain and crew in a Filipino feast of seafood and deserts.

This captain regularly arranges a crew-wide feast every few weeks so all the seafarers can gather together for fellowship.

Living aboard ship on the high sea for extended periods is so

isolating, and these crew-wide celebrations are important to the well-being of the seafarers.

Rev. Bob Schmitt  
Port Chaplain, Baltimore



## GPS Hacked

An apparent mass and blatant, GPS spoofing attack involving over 20 vessels in the Black Sea last month has navigation experts and maritime executives scratching their heads.<sup>1</sup>

Last June 22<sup>nd</sup>, a merchant ship reported to the U.S. Coast Guard Navigation Center that her GPS equipment intermittently displayed an incorrect position or no position at all. The Coast Guard responded there were no known anomalies with GPS or weather interference and advised the master check his software updates.

The master did so, and reported to the Coast Guard that the GPS equipment was fine. He also noted other ships in the area had reported similar problems to him. The master also sent photos of his ship's navigation displays, from which experts concluded that somebody was "spoofing" or sending false signals, causing the ship's GPS to provide false information.<sup>2</sup>

It is known that Russia has very

advanced capabilities to disrupt GPS, with over 250,000 cell towers equipped with jamming devices as a defense against U.S. missile attacks. There have also been press reports of GPS jamming in both Moscow and the Ukraine. It may even explain the recent U.S. Navy destroyer collisions.

While it's not known who would disrupt merchant shipping in the Black Sea or why, it serves as a reminder that one should verify GPS with different navigational systems.

As one commentator explained in an earlier GPS malfunction, "You don't get protection by simply plugging in a second satellite-navigation system. You need something that is different and doesn't share common modes of failure."<sup>3</sup>

1. Dana Goward, *Mass GPS Spoofing Attack in Black Sea?* MARITIME EXECUTIVE, July 11, 2017

2. Ibid

3. Jonathon Amos, *Map illustrates "Russian GPS" Failure*, BBC NEWS, April 9, 2014

## Internet at Sea

The technology is there: Internet connectivity in the middle of the ocean is possible. A recent survey of 1,790 crew members and 18 companies found that just 6% of the seafarers have sufficient Internet connectivity for video calls when at sea.<sup>1</sup> For us ashore, it's over 90%

Of those companies that do not provide Internet access, 83% cited high installation and utilization costs. Another 83% pretended concern that the crews might access illegal or adult content and 58% felt the Internet would be a distraction to work.

Seafarers have very little time to interact with their families during brief ports of call.

The inability of seafarers to communicate

while at sea with their loved ones back home plus the language and cultural barriers prevalent with multi-national crews impairs all social interaction. What leisure time a seafarer has is increasingly spent in self-imposed solitary confinement in his cabin without the Internet.

1. "Six Percent of Seafarers Video Connected", MARITIME EXECUTIVE, June 27, 2017.



No Internet service here

## Arbitrary and Capricious Conduct

Abdul is an Afghan who arrived at Newark Liberty International Airport last March, holding a valid immigrant visa issued by the United States Embassy in Kabul.<sup>1</sup>

Having worked as a cashier and waiter at a military base and the U.S. Embassy, he was beaten and targeted for execution by the Taliban. He moved to the military base in Kabul and applied there for his visa. The States Department vetted him over a period of 18 months and finally issued his visa after a military sponsor wrote a letter of recommendation.<sup>2</sup>

With passport and visa in hand, Abdul arrived in the U.S. and was stopped by Customs and Border Protection. He was questioned for 28 hours and very nearly deported, based

on a visa waiver he unknowingly signed at the request of the CBP officer who explained, “We’ve spoken to the consulate and we’re going to reissue your visa.” He was sent to Elizabeth Detention Center. His lawyers are fighting for his release and trying to stop his deportation.

Abdul’s attorneys argue that he should not have been detained in the first place. His passport was properly stamped before he entered the country. He was a fully documented refugee.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, the Republican President’s travel bans were not directed to Afghan nationals traveling from Afghanistan.

“Every single act they’ve done is incorrect, illegal or without justification,” explained one of the attorneys, not the least of which was CBP’s shabby ruse

to coerce a visa waiver, a not infrequent practice by CPB that is tantamount to criminal fraud.

CBP counters that the agency has the discretion to vet travelers in a process known as “secondary inspection” and turn them away -- even if they arrive with a visa. There must be, however, a plausible, even reasonable basis for the refusal to admit. While the entire Department of Homeland Security may be emboldened by the Republican President’s travel bans and his rhetoric against minorities, they cannot restrict entry into the United States to Aryan white supremacists.

When asked to comment on its treatment of Abdul, CBP’s sister agency, ICE (Immigration Customs Enforcement) demurred, indicating that the agency

doesn’t comment on specific cases. Abdul had a connecting flight to Ohio, where he was to have been met by a refugee resettlement agency. Instead, he languishes in EDC in a room with 44 other men. The food doesn’t taste very good, and he misses the smell of fresh air.

And hanging over his head is the possibility of deportation to Afghanistan, where the Taliban will try to kill him. “There are a lot of people who lost their heads over this,” he said.<sup>4</sup>

1. Karen Yi, *He Risked his Life for American troops. Now He’s Sitting in U.S. Detention*, NJ ADVANCE MEDIA, August 11, 2017

2. Ibid

3. Ibid

4. Ibid

## Crew Abandonment



The repatriated seafarers of the M/V Sharjah. One hadn’t seen his family for three years. One has 16 months of back wages outstanding. The mother of one fell ill, and he had no money to call her. The father of another died, and he couldn’t go home to grieve. A great deal of human hardship results from the financial machinations of maritime shipping.

The 14-man crew of the M/V IBA has been stranded in a United Arab Emirates port for over six months. During this period the shipowner, Alco Shipping Services, reportedly has not paid them and refuses to allow them medical treatment unless they pay \$250 per person for transportation ashore. Alco has threatened the crew with criminal prosecution and blacklisting if they publicize their complaints. The seafarers are trapped: Alco has their passports.<sup>1</sup>

This year alone, there have been 28 abandonment cases involving 339 seafarers.<sup>2</sup>

Seafarers aboard Alco vessels generally have not fared well. The crew of its M/V SHARJAH MOON has only recently been repatriated through the efforts of the Indian Government, but without the six months of back

wages owed.<sup>3</sup> The crews of three other Alco ships, M/V OCEAN PRIDE, OCEAN GRACE and ABS have also been abandoned with unpaid seafarer wages.<sup>4</sup>

MLC 2006 imposes financial guarantees on ships to avoid the hardships of abandonment, which flag states are expected to enforce. It remains to be seen whether United Arab Emirates will stand up to the Pakistani-owned Alco Shipping Services.

1. M/T IBA Report, HUMAN RIGHTS AT SEA, July 13, 2017

2. *Seafarers’ Plight Overlooked*, MARITIME EXECUTIVE, August 22, 2017

3. *Sharjah Moon Sailors Latest of Over 50 Indian Sailors to Return Home from UAE* WORLD MARITIME NEWS, July 15, 2017

4. Sajila Saseendran, *Stranded Indian Sailor Wants to See His Parents*, GULF NEWS AND SOCIETY, August 23, 2017

## Jump Starting Humanity

*“We strongly believe nonprof- it values and mission are now in jeopardy. [The Republican] President . . . may be the progen- itor of today’s threats or simply the catalyst that has unleashed years of frustrations that many Americans now voice.”<sup>1</sup>*

The two commentators who authored this strong belief were speaking about the need to strengthen democracy. One might argue, however, that the frustration they cite transcends governance and reaches far into our social consciousness and capacity for humanity. Neither seem to be on the ascent.

Our lives are hectic, and we have our own problems about which to worry. Who has time or energy to ponder social conscious- ness? Today, we’d rather escape unpleasant social realities. Pop culture, sports, smart-phones and other cheap distractions provide superficial means of escape. “It is easier to be entertained than it is to be informed.”<sup>2</sup>

The disconnect with social consciousness is a peculiar- ly American trait. Americans prize individuality; it’s written into the country’s DNA. And the corollary to individualism is privatization. Over the last three decades, markets and market values have exploded into the public domain — health care, education, public safety, national security, procreation and other social goods.<sup>3</sup>

If everything is for sale, then those who are affluent can distance themselves even further from “unpleasant social realities”.

This separation is not confined to the super-rich living in gated communities. It extends through nearly all economic strata.

For years, parents have paid

their children to get better grades, and now, schools are offering similar moneta- ry incentives. We can also buy our way out of long lines in air- ports and high ways. And munic- ipalities can get free police cars as long as they are festo- oned with ads and logos.<sup>4</sup>

The list goes on. The point is that we measure the value of our time and effort in monetary terms. We have commodified ourselves, and sometimes it seems that we have only a reduced level of interest in anything that doesn’t benefit us directly.

Not surprisingly, these incentives yield less gratification and more frustration over time. So here we are, in a highly polarized country, where people with different backgrounds, social standings and economic resources “bump up against each other in the course of everyday life,”<sup>5</sup> and we are left with two choices. “Do we want a society where everything is up for sale? Or are there certain moral and civic goods that markets do not honor and money cannot buy?”<sup>6</sup>

For Lutherans, the answer is clear: we are to love (and mingle with) our neighbors.

*“This church must participate in social structures critically, for sin also is at work in the world. Social structures and processes combine life-giving and life-destroying dynamics*



*in complex mixtures and in varying degrees. This church, therefore, must unite realism and vision, wisdom and courage, in its social responsibility. It needs constantly to discern when to support and when to confront society’s cultural patterns, values, and powers.”<sup>7</sup>*

When apologia for racism, violence or income equality are offered by the leaders of our Government, we cannot hide in a theological cocoon of our own making. The Kingdom is here and now, and we must speak out now, clearly, and be heard.

1. Gary Bass and Mark Rosenman, *Trump Era Requires a Quick Spurt of Grant Making to Aid Democracy*, THE CHRONICLE OF PHILANTHROPY, August 2017, page 40
2. Dustin Axe, *The Importance of Social Consciousness in an Age of Declining Democracy*, SPEAKOUT, January 26, 2015, www.truthout.org
3. Michael J. Sandel, WHAT MONEY CAN’T BUY – THE MORAL LIMITS OF MARKETS, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013, page 9
4. Sandel, op cit, page 193
5. Sandel, op cit, page 203
6. Ibid
7. *A Social Statement: The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective*, EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA, September 1991

Christopher V. Roehrer, Director  
Development and Communications

### Mission Rationale

Within the shipping industry there is often little concern for seafarer welfare beyond recruitment and productivity, and within the government, any concern for their welfare is displaced by fear and homeland security.

Within the prison industry, there is little concern for the welfare of immigrants beyond very lucrative government contracts to warehouse people with little accountability and minimal cost. Again, within the government, any concern for their welfare is displaced by fear and homeland security.

### Mission Highlights

Our seven port chaplains visited over 16,680 seafarers last year. Our Guesthouse was ready and able to offer accommodations to far more asylum seekers than the government was willing to release from private prisons, due in part to intense lobbying by the prison industry. So we have inaugurated a program of regular visitation to immigrants in their prisons and warehouses.

### Sleep Well By Doing Good

Our Guesthouse accommodates not only seafarers and immigrants, but church gatherings, civic groups and individuals in need of safe, affordable lodging. It helps them accomplish their goals and missions, and their patronage helps us support our missions to seafarers and immigrants.

Book online at [www.sihny.org](http://www.sihny.org).

144 Years of Service



Harbor of Hospitality

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# Seafarers International House

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