

PORTCALL

Seafarers International House

MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: A HOME: MY REFUGE AND MY FORTRESS

Good things come in threes, they say. Three times in the past month I've had the most unexpected and appreciated conversations with seafarers in my role as Executive Director.

The first time I was in the elevator at the guesthouse and, out of the blue, a seafarer said to me: "You know this IS my home, right"? I answered that I indeed hope he feels welcome here as a home away from home. He persisted: "No, I mean this IS the one and only home I have and I so appreciate it."

A second encounter happened in the laundry room of the guesthouse as I was washing my clothes. A seafarer, again out of the blue, said "SIH is my family, you know? These are the people that I depend on as my support system." We went on to have a heart to heart about his extended family and challenges that were part of the ebb and flow of being human.

Then I encountered a group of Filipino seafarers at Christmastime and as they received one of our Christmas at Sea satchels one of them said "This gift

You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord "My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust."

(Psalm 91 1-2)

is so wonderful. It reminds me that I have a home away from home."

Home and shelter are important to the human species and, along with it, community. Here at Seafarers International House (SIH) we have a mantra that says that we "nurture the human spirit and foster human dignity" to those who are away from home or those who know only SIH as home.

What a privilege it is to bring shelter, refuge and home to over 20,000 seafarers and 40 asylum seekers each year. Thank you for being part of this sacred homing. 



Feeling at home: Last fall, seafarers Stuart, Kevin and Paris (from left to right) had an ad hoc reunion and reminisced in the lounge area of the Seafarers International House. Photo by Henryk Behnke.



Marsh Luther Dreye



Crew members on the way to the mall with Ruth Setaro's granddaughter, who came along that day. Photo by Ruth Setaro 2019.

Their happiness surrounded me and lifted me up ...

By Ruth Setaro, SIH Port Chaplain in New Haven, CT

I wasn't sure that I was ready. The shipping agent called to tell me that a ship had arrived in port and needed help, was I able to make a visit? My husband had just passed away the previous week and I was still just going through the motions of living. So, for several hours I debated with myself, could I do it, could I not. The "not" part was winning but soon I felt a little push and I found myself getting the Wi-Fi and all the other things together that I usually take for a visit and I headed to the port.

I was greeted by a delightful crew of seafarers from Thailand. They were so happy to see me and, of course, my Wi-Fi as they would finally be able to contact family at home. The captain asked if it was possible for me to take several of them to shopping. I couldn't believe my eyes and I guess I started to giggle because when I returned to pick them up later, they were lined up outside with twelve, yes twelve, grocery carts overflowing with food. Wow, where were we going to put everything? After safely returning to the ship, the captain asked if I would be available tomorrow as they would like to do some sightseeing, visit Yale and the Peabody Museum.

At 1300 the next day, eleven crew members climbed into the van. I decided that I would give them first a driving tour of Yale and New Haven explaining what and where everything was and where they might want to walk after their visit to the Peabody. I also showed them the Chinese market a short walking distance from the museum. At 1700 I received a call that they were all ready to be picked up at the Chinese mar-

ket. Oh my, when I pulled up there were crates and crates of vegetables and other items to be loaded in the van. Now, really, where would we put all this and 11 crew? Somehow, it was all successfully loaded under, over and on top of everyone. The captain was so happy to get food that they had not been able to have in over 6 months and asked me to return just one more time before they had to sail.

The next day again, eleven seafarers climbed into the van for a last shopping spree and I kid you not, when I picked them up, they were lined up with 16 overflowing carts. Can you imagine trying to cash out all that order? You would not want to be in the back of that line!

Now, do I believe that God had something to do with sending me that ship at that time when I needed some lifting up? Yes, I really do, because I needed that little nudge to get back to the work I love. It will take time for me to find a new normal, but this was a start. This ship and its crew brought me great joy in the middle of my sorrow. They were so kind and loving and so appreciative of all the help I gave them. Their happiness surrounded me and lifted me up at a time I needed it the most. ⚓

90% of world trade is transported on merchant ships by over 1,600,000 seafarers. SIH's six port chaplains assist thousands of them in Baltimore, Connecticut, New Jersey & New York, and Philadelphia.



Left to right: 2019 Outstanding Friends of Seafarers Awardees Enrico Esopa, Lois Zabrocky, Kathleen Hunt, Bill Woodhour. Pastor Marsh Drege with Lois and MC Raymond Burke. 2018 Awardees Philip W. J. Fisher and Bill Van Loo with Kathleen. Photos by Gina Calderone.

THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2020, 6 – 8PM

20TH ANNUAL SETTING THE COURSE BANQUET

Please join us for a fundraiser that supports the Port Mission that serves about 28,000 seafarers each year. All funds raised help provide for the salaries of six chaplains in the ports of CT, NJ & NY, Philadelphia and Baltimore. They board ships offering connectivity and literature to all regardless of faith or nationality. They also take mariners to the mall or medical facilities, free of charge. At the banquet, we will honor shipping industry representatives who have improved the welfare of seafarers:

Outstanding Friends of Seafarers:

James E. Caponiti, President, American Maritime Congress (AMC)



"I am proud of my 45-year career in an industry that treasures mariners dedicated to the economic and military

security of the U.S. While at Maritime Administration (MARAD), I was appointed to the Senior Executive Service and tasked to nurture a trained mariner pool and to promote economic viability and sealift readiness for the U.S. I also chaired for 14 years a NATO planning board to maintain civilian based sealift readiness, to defend against terrorism, and to promote collaboration among allies. Having joined AMC in 2011, I continue this work by informing the public and government on policy affecting the U.S.-flag merchant marine."

Eric P. Ebeling, President & CEO, American Roll-on Roll-off Carrier (ARC) Group



Eric joined ARC in 2003 and has been investing in U.S.-flag tonnage, having flagged-in 5 ships to U.S. registry in

the past 4 years; providing quality of life for ARC mariners; and supporting United Seamen's Service. With Eric, ARC has been ensuring security to crews, cargoes, and ships and has been committed to sustainability. Eric is recipient of the 2017 Herb Brand Memorial Man of the Year Award by the Maritime Port Council of Greater NY/NJ and was named the 2011 National Defense Transportation Association Young Executive of the Year.

Steven E. Werse, retired Int'l Secretary-Treasurer, International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots (MM&P)



Steven has been active in MM&P from 1990 to mid-2019. His career includes three decades of sailing

and 14 years of service with the US Naval Reserve. Steven was the recipient of a Citation of Merit for rescues at sea in 2007 and 2006, and for four consecutive years, the ships he captained received the Chamber of Shipping of America's Jones F. Devlin Award for no-downtime-injuries. In 2019 he received the Lifetime Achieve-

ment award of The Captain Richard Phillips Lane Kirkland Maritime Trust, which assists individuals in the pursuit of a career in the maritime industry, and has been inducted into SUNY Maritime College Heritage Hall. As a Trustee of Officers' Union of International Seamen, Steven continues to assist seafarers in distress worldwide.

Special Recognition for Service to Seafarers:

Timothy J. Ferrie, President, The Marine Society of the City of New York



Timothy has been a member of the Marine Society that was chartered in 1770 to "...improve maritime knowl-

edge and relieve ... distressed shipmasters" since 1991 and became its 70th President in 2006. As Trustee and President of The Trustees of the Sailors' Snug Harbor, Timothy is also dedicated to assisting retired mariners. In 2014, the Trustees awarded Seafarers International House a sizable grant to accommodate seafarers. Furthermore, Timothy has cared for mariners as a member and Full Branch Pilot of the United NJ Sandy Hook Pilots Association for four decades and is the East Coast Regional Rep for MM&P Pilot group for over 20 years.

To get your tickets (\$650 pp) visit www.sihny.org/upcoming-events.
PORT CALL | Winter/Spring 2020

SEAFARERS INTERNATIONAL HOUSE: A SANCTUARY

Henryk Behnke with Rev. Marsh Luther Drege and Rev. E. Roy Riley, SIH Board Member and former Bishop New Jersey Synod

In August 2019, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Church-wide Assembly voted to approve a memorial that declares the ELCA a sanctuary church. Thus, the ELCA became North America's first denomination to declare itself a sanctuary church body. As such the ELCA is committed to welcoming the stranger as the Bible urges us to do.

Seafarers International House (SIH) preceded this sanctuary declaration by two years, when the board courageously voted for SIH to become a sanctuary organization in September 2017. In fact, since its founding, which traces back to a mission for Swedish seafarers and immigrants in 1873, SIH has been walking alongside immigrants and refugees.

The impetus for SIH's most recent program for asylum seekers was given in 2008, when then NJ Synod Bishop E. Roy Riley and NJ Senator Bob Menendez visited the Elizabeth Detention Center in New Jersey in response to the increasing number of reported deaths in detention facilities.

Since then SIH volunteers and members of partner organizations have continued these visits in a formal Assistance to Asylum Seekers and Detention Center Visitation Program. They work hand-in-hand with asylum seekers giving them hope and getting detainees the proper documentation and legal representation to achieve a favorable outcome for those that fled persecution and violence.

SIH has taken on another critical and underserved need: providing free transitional housing and social assistance for those released from

detention. This means that the SIH guesthouse has become a sanctuary for immigrants.

Most of the immigrants staying at SIH have no friends or family in the US. Most are asylees, people who have been granted the legal right to stay in the United States of America and who have been released from detention and would otherwise face the risk of becoming homeless or being exploited.

The new guests are welcomed by SIH Staff and receive food cards, MetroCards for public transportation, and Asylee Welcome Packs with toiletries and clothing provided for them by congregations and individuals. Over the next weeks, SIH staff help asylees get work permits and drivers licenses, find permanent housing and prepare them for job interviews.

Some of those served by SIH return to become mentors to current asylees. Informal meals and meetings, like the one pictured below, help new residents make friends and find a

network people who care for them.

In 2019, SIH increased the room allocation to asylees from 4 to 6, assisting 36 new Americans (up from 28) in becoming contributing members of their communities often within less than three months.

SIH joins the church in its commitment *"to work toward just and humane policies affecting migrants in and outside the U.S."* This "new" dimension of SIH's mission has already become as much of a blessing to SIH staff and supporters as for those they serve.

Note: SIH's work with immigrants has been supported by the Metro NY and NJ Synods and Advent Mission Fund along with generous individuals. In 2020, funding will also be provided through an ELCA Hunger Grant.

Perhaps you as an individual or your congregation can help sponsor an asylee? \$1,000 per month supports an asylee with housing, food and transportation. \$200 per month affords an asylee food and transportation. [!\[\]\(248b91fcdac4810ffd15cf33fb6aec6f_img.jpg\)](#)



Monday Dinner with Social Work Intern James (right) and guesthouse residents and friends. Photo by Marsh Luther Drege.

CHRISTMAS-AT-SEA: A HOLIDAY INITIATIVE

This past Holiday Season, a record breaking 2,601 crew members regardless of their faith or nationality received their satchels filled with a sweatshirt, socks, a T-shirt, a knitted cap & scarf, nuts or chocolate and a Holiday Greetings card.



22 seafarers of the Bulk Carrier Royal Hope coming from Ghent, Belgium and headed for Brazil received their Christmas-At-Sea satchels in Baltimore the day after Christmas. Photo by K. Bob Schmitt.

Christmas-At-Sea participants helped us break recent records by contributing warm clothing and assembling 2,601 satchels. On behalf of the overjoyed seafarers, whose Christmas had been made special, we thank all individuals, congregations, youth groups, and companies, who donated generously. It is not too early to start planning for the Holiday Season 2020. For info visit <https://www.sihny.org/christmas-at-sea>



Staff members including CEO Lois Zabrocky of Seaways International, Inc. gathered to assemble Christmas-At-Sea satchels for their colleagues and others at sea.

The new reusable Christmas-At-Sea satchel:



Sponsored by

International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots

Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association

Seafarers International Union



Two vans, benches removed, were needed to pick up the 905 (a record for the synod) Christmas-At-Sea satchels donated by the Upper Susquehanna Synod members. Photo by Marsh Drege.

Christmas-At-Sea is supported by countless individuals, youth and senior groups, businesses and congregations. Thank you!

PROGRAMS & EVENTS

City Service Youth Program in Manhattan

Each summer youth groups stay at the Guest-house near Union Square to serve people in need and experience the Big Apple. SIH staff sets up service sites at soup kitchens, food pantries and meal delivery programs and give advice on how to schedule the days.

The cost is \$58 per person per day and includes breakfast. Space is limited and July is the primary month for this offering. Please contact Pastor Marsh Drege at (212)-677-4800 X 1204 or email him for more information. ⚓



Youth from Grace Lutheran, State College, PA, took Manhattan in July 2019.

2019 Right of Asylum Reception

Over 100 people gathered in view of the Statue of Liberty in NYC as Seafarers International House's Marsh Luther Drege awarded six *Outstanding Friends of Immigrants* from partner organizations. The event was sponsored by Apple Bank, Channel of Peace by Kevin Tuerff, and The Janis Family. ⚓



Pictured from left to right are: Edinson Calderon, *Queer Detainee Empowerment Project*; Arlender Santiago Nunez Lino, *New Sanctuary Coalition*; Franklin Sooho Lee, *Lutheran Social Services of New York*; John Wilkinson, *Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture*; Rosa Santana, *First Friends of NJ & NY*; Robert "Bob" Cohen, *St. John's Lutheran Church, Poughkeepsie, NY*; and presenter Pastor Marsh Luther Drege. Photo by Henryk Behnke.

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 an 84-room Guesthouse in New York City. This mission serves a total of over 33,000 people including over 16,000 seafarers visited and almost 6,000 lodging nights provided for seafarers, asylees, and domestic violence and human trafficking survivors. 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: 84% of our revenue is spent on programs, only 16% on administration and fundraising.

PLAN RETIREMENT TO HELP OTHERS

You can easily help seafarers and immigrants in urgent need by naming *Seafarers International House* as a beneficiary of your 401(k), IRA or other qualified retirement plan.

This giving option is quick and easy. All you have to do is sign a paper or online form from your plan administrator and designate Seafarers International House as a full, partial or contingent beneficiary.

Your gift will make a difference in the lives of mariners and asylum seekers and may have beneficial tax implications for your heirs.

Feel free to contact Henryk Behnke, Director of Development, to discuss how you can use your retirement plan for the good of others. You can reach him at (212) 677-4800 ext. 1203 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.

Pictured below are a few members of the Homeport Society.

Why don't you join them today? 



From top to bottom starting right: Sterling Gilreath; Jill Scibilia; Rev. Margay Whitlock; Susan Bell.
Photos by Henryk Behnke.

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For more information about our social work outreach to seafarers, asylum seekers and trips to detention centers to visit with immigrant detainees, email Pastor Marsh Drege (drege@sihnyc.org) or call him at (212) 677-4800 X 1204.

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Seafarers International House



Seafarers International House provides a home to and is a sanctuary for people on life's journey regardless of faith or nationality. Photo by Dimi Katsavaris on Unsplash.

IN THIS ISSUE

MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR AND
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
A HOME: MY REFUGE AND MY
FORTRESS

THEIR HAPPINESS SURROUNDED
ME AND LIFTED ME UP ...

20TH ANNUAL SETTING THE
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HOUSE: A SANCTUARY

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