

PORTCALL

Seafarers International House

MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: 150th Anniversary of Service

*The light shines in the darkness
and the darkness has not
overcome it. John 1: 5*

Lighting the way for both seafarers
and immigrants since 1873.

This is the year of *Seafarers International House'* (SIH) 150th anniversary, celebrating **fifteen decades of uninterrupted services to over 2 million seafarers and immigrants** in New York City and beyond! SIH is not a place, but rather a service to people on the way.

SIH's services are more urgently needed today than ever before. From merchant mariners caught in the crew change crisis of a pandemic and supply chain disruptions, to refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine needing a safe place to be, to asylum seekers arbitrarily transported from the southern border to New York City – Seafarers International House always stands ready to serve.

Founded in 1873 as a Lutheran maritime ministry supported by the Church of Sweden and soon thereafter expanding to help immigrants, *Seafarers International House* today is an affiliate of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in

America (ELCA). SIH is one of the largest shore-based ministries dedicated to the welfare of active merchant mariners, including crew members on today's container ships entering ports along the Eastern Seaboard and beginning in winter 2023 to seafarers in the Port of Albany. Since its inception, SIH has cared for the needs of seafarers and vulnerable immigrants, people on the way.

Commissioned by the Church of Sweden, Pastor Per Johan Swärd arrived in New York around the same time that the General Council of the Lutheran Church in the USA established Das Deutsche Emigranten Haus (German Immigrants House) and from this base Pastor Swärd conducted a ministry to seafarers and soon after to immigrants. In 1895, two houses on Moore Street in lower Manhattan were rented to relieve the cramped quarters of the German Immigrants House and to establish a more autonomous Swedish response. One year later, 5 Water Street next door was added. A growing demand for space led to the purchase of a five-story building at 6 Water Street in 1927. It was then renamed the *Lutheran Seamen's Center*.

More space was needed. So, on September 24, 1964, a new 11-story building was dedicated at 123 East 15th Street. Named the *Seaman and International House*, the new facility provided services to seafarers, to immigrants, to unaccompanied women and to travelers,

who, through room fees, supported the mission.

With the pandemic in 2020, that business model had to be adjusted. New income was derived from the lease of the building to social service organizations that share the mission of caring for people with temporary housing needs. Alternate lodging was found in 2021 at a partner organization with "overflow" provided in mid-town hotels.

This spring and summer, *Seafarers International House* continues to look for a suitable permanent home in New York City with mission-based guest rooms and administrative offices.

In the meantime, we invite you to **celebrate with us** on **April 20** at the New York Athletic Club with members of the shipping industry at our ***Setting the Course Reception & 150th Anniversary Celebration***. (Details on page 3).

Visit our home page at www.sihnyc.org to view a **4-minute video** about our beginnings and how we assist seafarers and immigrants today. You will also find a link to a **complimentary PDF** of our 30-page **150th Anniversary Commemoration booklet**. A printed copy will be mailed to everyone who donates **\$150 or more at one time this year**.

THANK YOU for helping us be the light shining for those in the dark. 

Marsh Luther Dregge



Photo: The Immigrant Home at 5 Water Street around 1912.

GERMAN SEAMEN'S MISSION: LEGACY AND FUTURE

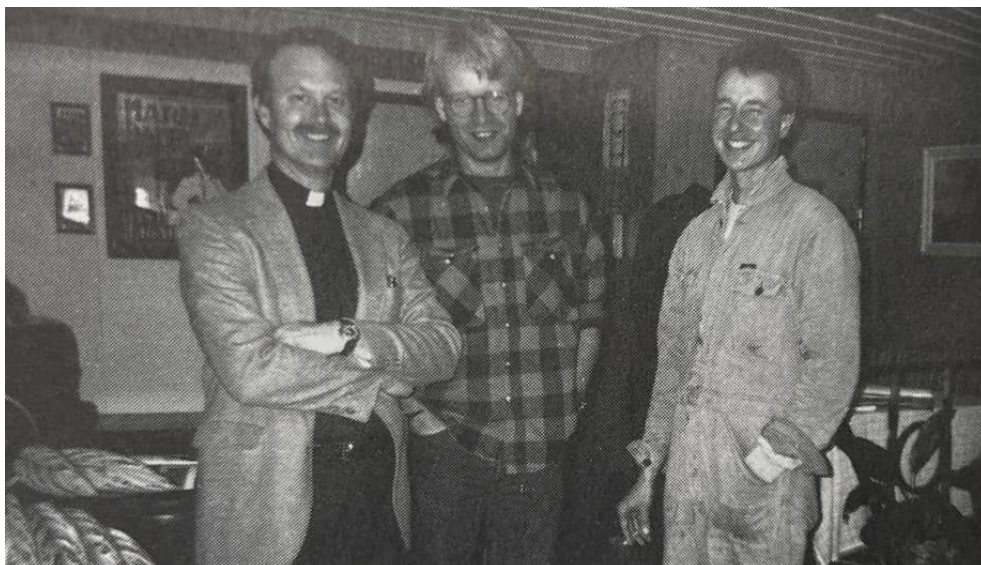
By Henryk Behnke

Recently, SIH has officially re-launched the partnership with the German Seamen's Mission (*Deutsche Seemannsmission e. V.*) and is following up with a trip to their conference in April 2023, sending both our Executive Director and Pastor **Marsh Drege** and our German speaking Pastor **Arnd Braun-Storck**. This partnership can be traced back to when Pastor Per Johan Swärd used the German Emigrant House as his base of operation in 1873.

Years later, in 1905, Dr. **Gottlieb C. Berkemeier** (1855 – 1924), the son of the German Emigrant House's director, became interested in seamen's welfare. Dr. Berkemeier persuaded a Lutheran organization in Hanover, Germany, to send a representative to found a German seamen's mission in the Port of New York. Pastor Wilhelm Thun (1872 - 1969) arrived with this assignment in September 1906. Early meetings of the *German Seamen's Mission in the Port of New York* were held at the Imperial German General Consulate (11 Broadway) and at the Emigrant House in lower Manhattan.

In 1907, the work of the German Seamen's Mission began in Hoboken, N.J., a municipality directly across from New York City. The fledgling Mission bought the building at 64 Hudson Street in Hoboken on credit, for a sum of \$12,000. From January 21 to April 26, 1908, the Mission was visited by 7,575 seamen. In the same period, 824 seamen attended religious services, while 279 received sick visits. There were 121 visits to ships.

The German Seamen's Mission endured the fallout of two World Wars, the depression, and the changing demographics of Hoboken. In 1979 the Hoboken facility was sold, and mission



Pastor Clint Padgitt (left) with then GSM intern Arnd Braun-Storck (center) visit a seafarer ca. 1991-92.

work was consolidated first to a building at West 22nd Street and starting in 1983 in the offices of SIH.

From 1978 until his retirement in 2011, Rev. **Clint Padgitt** steered the German Seamen's Mission through challenging times that culminated with the financial crisis of 2008.

After 125 years of working collaboratively in the service to seafarers in the Port of New York & New Jersey, the board of directors of the German Sea-

men's Mission of New York determined that its mission would best be achieved through its merger into SIH in 2012.

Today, SIH reaffirms this historic partnership as a member of the umbrella organization, *Deutsche Seemannsmission e. V.* We continue to have German speaking staff in the port of New York that serves German as well as non-German-speaking flagged vessels and is partially funded by the *German Society of the City of New York*, the *New York Community Trust*, and donations. ⚓



Pastor Arnd delivering Christmas-at-Sea satchels to the crew of CMA CGM IVANHOE sailing under the flag of Germany in December 2019.



Left to right: 2022 Outstanding Friend of Seafarers awardee Jim Patti with his family, Sun Yang (Organization of Black Maritime Graduates), Fair Kim (American Maritime Congress) and friends, Marsh Drege presenting Beth Rooney the 2022 Special Recognition award. Photos by Hannah Mrakovčić, 2022.

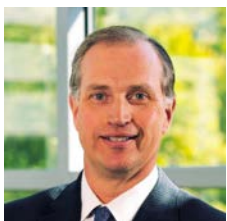


THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 2023, 5:00 – 7:30PM @ NEW YORK ATHLETIC CLUB **SETTING THE COURSE RECEPTION & 150TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

Since 1873, Seafarers International House has been *lighting the way for both seafarers and immigrants*. For over two decades, since 2001, the annual Setting the Course event has been a major fundraiser supporting the Port Mission that serves about 20,000 seafarers annually. All funds raised help to provide for the salaries of our chaplains in the ports of Albany, Baltimore, New Haven, and New Jersey & New York. Additionally, funds support subsidized lodging for seafarers in Manhattan.

Please join us as we will honor shipping industry representatives who have improved the welfare of seafarers:

Outstanding Friends of Seafarers:



Mark W. Barker is President of *The Interlake Steamship Company*, the largest privately held shipping com-

pany on the Great Lakes. Before taking the helm as Interlake's President in April 2007, Mark held various appointments of ascending leadership moving from Fleet Engineer to Vice President and Treasurer. Prior to joining Interlake, he sailed aboard numerous vessels in the Great Lakes, Gulf of Mexico and trans-Atlantic trades. Mark is past Chairman of the board for Lake Carriers' Association, serves on the board of Moran Towing Corporation and is an active member on the Council of the American Bureau of Shipping. As Presi-

dent of Interlake, Mark is a strong leader with a clear voice on industry issues at the state and national level and plays a significant role in supporting seafarers' welfare.



Adam Vokac is *Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association's (M.E.B.A)* National President and has served as

an official for 13 years. Adam graduated from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy as Valedictorian in 2000; he continued his education at MIT and earned master's degrees in both Mechanical Engineering and Ocean Systems Management. He has sailed on a wide array of vessel types and all propulsion modes, Steam/Diesel/Nuclear/Gas Turbine and has an Unlimited Horsepower Chief Engineer's License. Adam guided the Union through the pandemic, successfully helping mariners navigate through the worst of the crew change crisis that was created by restrictive global border and travel constraints. He made sure mariners were properly incentivized to support the vaccination effort and worked to mitigate the mental health crisis of unrelenting restriction to ship orders. Recognizing the mariner shortage and retention issues early, Adam has dedicated himself to the pursuit of improving at sea living conditions, internet connectivity, diverse work opportunities, high-quality training, and safe working hours.

Special Recognition for Service to Seafarers:



John Atkins is the President of *Global Container Terminals USA*, overseeing the operations of GCT's two con-

tainer terminals in New York and New Jersey. A 35-year maritime executive, he started his career at SeaLand Terminals after graduating from Kean University with a B.S. in Management Science. He has also held senior management positions at several Ocean Carriers. John is on the boards of the Metropolitan Marine Maintenance Contractors Association and the Shipping Association of New York and New Jersey (SANYNJ). Additionally, he serves on boards of charities in Staten Island and Hudson County. He also serves as Chairman of the Confidential Discussion Agreement and the Sustainable Terminal Services Agreement, which are two entities that help to further the services of the terminals in the Port of NY/NJ. He is also on the Council for Port Performance in New York. During the pandemic, John facilitated vaccination efforts for crew members with the Port Authority and SANYNJ. To assist seafarers, he helped make provisions to routinely provide communications and transportation with crews for onshore leave. **To get your tickets (\$500 pp) visit www.sihnyc.org/upcoming-events.**

HELP FOR SEAFARERS & IMMIGRANTS: 4 NEW STAFF

By Pastor Marsh Luther Drege

While our mission center is “on the move” with our temporary home currently at a partner organization, our ongoing mission to seafarers and asylees is steady.

As the Lutheran response to the urgent needs of vulnerable seafarers and immigrants, we are delighted to introduce you to four new staff members:



The husband-and-wife team, Pastors **Kate Drefke and Lowell Chilton**, are collaborating as port chaplains. A brand-new partnership between Seafarers International House (SIH) and the Albany Maritime Ministry (AMM) is

being inaugurated with Pastors Kate and Lowell providing



consistent pastoral coverage of the brown river port of Albany since January. AMM has their own board and they have graciously welcomed SIH's sponsored chaplains to complete their ministry by hiring Pastors Kate and Lowell to be half time chaplains

representing both AMM and SIH.

When they are not providing spiritual and practical support to crews, Pastor Kate can be found serving the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Poestenkill and Faith Lutheran Church in Troy while Pastor Lowell serves First Lutheran in Albany. Before Albany, these pastors served Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregations in Pennsylvania and Alaska and are both graduates of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Oakland, CA. Pastor Kate just completed the Seafarers Welfare and Maritime Ministry course at the Houston International Maritime Center managed by the North American Maritime Ministry Association (NAMMA), where she learned all about shipping, safety, and best practices in assisting mariners. Lowell will take the course next year. The first thing you notice when you meet Kate and Lowell is that they both look at you with keen interest and a deep longing for connection. This approach serves them well as they now connect with seafarers from all over the world arriving in Albany.



In Newark, Pastor **Jonathan Westerlund** is new and, yet, not new to this port chaplain position. He is new in the sense that now he is hired as staff. Before, in 2015, he assisted seafarers as

a SIH Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) intern for the summer. He was a natural port chaplain then and today he brings both that summer experience and a broader pastoral approach after being ordained and a parish pastor for 5 years. Currently, he is pastoring Christ our Saviour Lutheran Church and Bethany Lutheran Church in Jersey City and Grace Lutheran Church in Bayonne. He is very good at multi-tasking with these congregations that are conveniently located near the ports he now visits. Pastor Jonathan has shepherded ELCA congregations in Connecticut and Massachusetts, attended United Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia, and was elected one of the youngest board members of the Metropolitan New York Synod when he was in high school. Growing up in Long Island, Jonathan has always felt a connection with the sea and the church and is grateful to put both passions together.



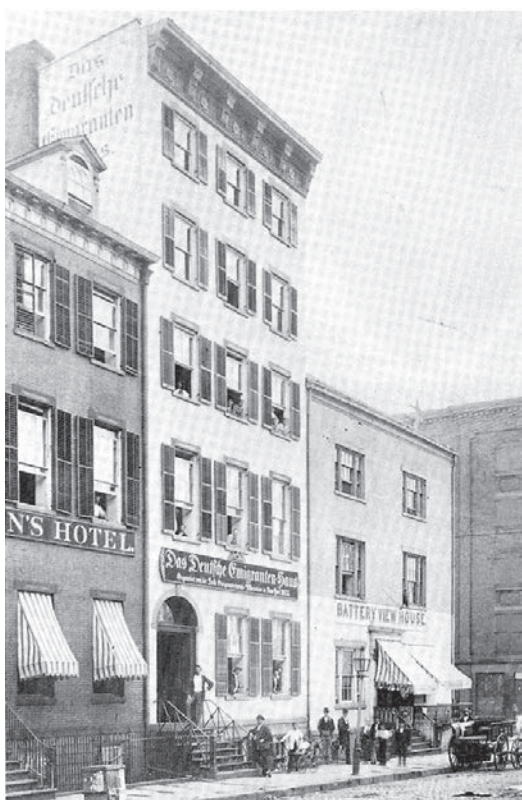
Over the years, SIH has been blessed with capable social work interns from Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College, but a licensed social worker who could build lasting relationships with asylees and seafarers

as well as partner organizations was missing. Interrupted by the pandemic, the search for a social worker has led to the onboarding of **Michael Bradford**, LMSW. Michael is a graduate of Hunter College and also works as a private psychotherapist. He has experience with working with vulnerable populations and is looking forward to augmenting his psychotherapy practice with the case work and program development needed as SIH's first professional social worker. The half-time position is partially funded by ELCA through the AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities) program and by the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation (MCHF).

These four gifted individuals are proof positive that even as we may move our mission center, our commitment to people “on the move” has never been more prioritized. Now, we can expand our in-depth service approach for seafarers and for asylum seekers with these caring and well-trained professionals. 🚢



Immigrants on steamer passing Liberty. Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, July 2, 1887 - National Parks Service.



For over twenty years SIH had its base of operation at the Deutsche Emigranten Haus (German Emigrants House), before moving to its own quarters in 1895.

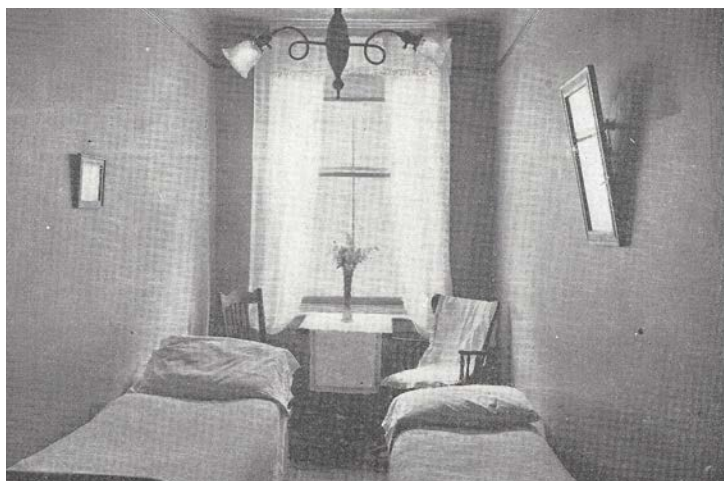
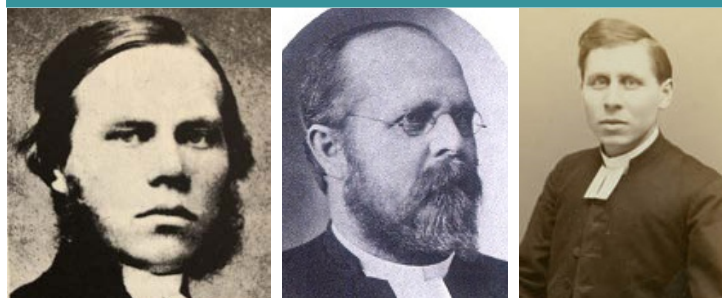


Photo: Guestroom at the "Immigrant Home" at 5 Water Street around 1912. (See exterior photo on page 1).

FIRST 4 STAFF MEMBERS

By Henryk Behnke



Our first "staff member" was Swedish Pastor **Per Johan Swärd** (1845 - 1901, photo left) who was sent to initiate a ministry to seafarers in New York City.

Pastor Swärd was no stranger to this type of work having served for four years in the busy port of Constantinople after the opening of the Suez Canal. Arriving in New York with his wife and son, Pastor Swärd began providing much needed assistance to Scandinavian seafarers in a language they understood. It was demanding work.

But the 28-year-old pastor soon became aware of other needs. A flood of immigrants arrived at Castle Garden and later at Ellis Island. Many were Swedes, exhausted by the journey and in need of practical and spiritual help. Pastor Swärd felt called to minister to these individuals and families in addition to his work with seafarers.

Swärd's base of operation was the Deutsche Emigranten Haus (German Emigrants House) on State Street across from Castle Garden, now Castle Clinton in Battery Park.

After four years, Pastor Swärd was called to a church in Baltimore in 1877. Later that same year, recently ordained Pastor **Erik Alfred Fogelstrom** (1850 - 1909, center photo) picked up where Swärd left off. Raised in a seafaring family and a former seafarer himself, Fogelstrom was the perfect match for ministry to seafarers and immigrants.

But in 1879, Pastor Fogelstrom was called to Immanuel Lutheran Church, Omaha, Nebraska, to serve the Swedish community.

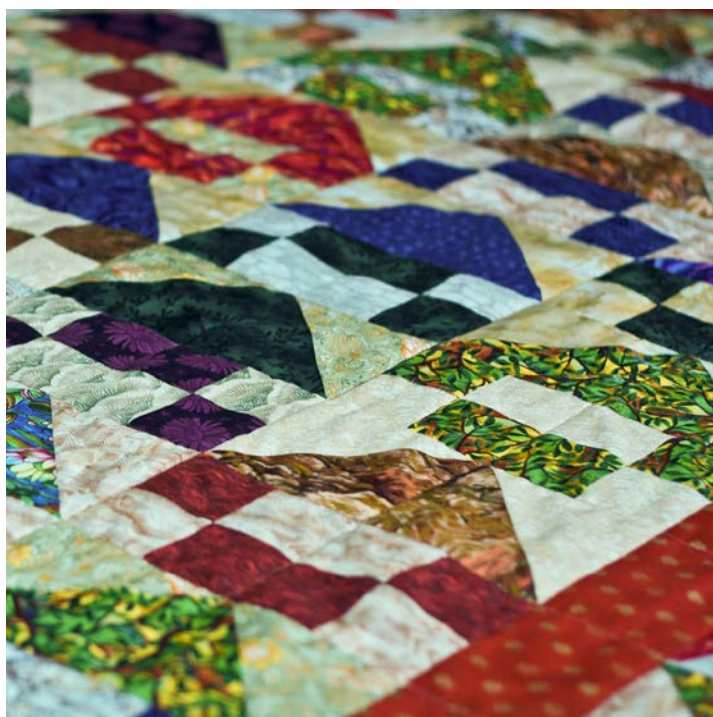
From 1880 to 1882, Rev. **Albert Rodell** (photo right) took up this ministry. Rodell reported to the Board that he visited the heavy-hearted newcomers at Castle Garden nearly every day. As the demands on his time and energies grew, additional help was needed. **Emma von Roxendorf** (no photo available), a noble Christian-spirited woman, was engaged to assist with the sick and troubled immigrants. 

OF NORTHERN STITCHES, CONTAINER SHIPS, PORT CHAPLAINS AND SEAFARERS: A JOURNEY OF HOPE THRU SIH

BY PASTOR SUSAN TJORNEHOJ, SIH BOARD MEMBER AND SUSTAINER, CALVARY LUTHERAN CHURCH, BEMIDJI, MN

It is a Thursday morning at Calvary Lutheran Church in Bemidji, MN. Canada is just 107 miles away. The winter morning is brisk, 7 degrees, with a stiff breeze out of the north. This means it feels like way too many degrees below zero. For the 8 to 10 women who are here, cold temps, icy winds, even blowing snow can't keep them home. The call to serve others through the art and craft of quilting is too compelling. Colors surround them, blues and greens, browns and oranges, reds, yellows, floral and stripe, squares and scraps, piecing together discarded fabric into warmth which becomes shawls and tents, blankets, a wedding dress, maybe even a death wrap for those fleeing war or the ravages of climate change. But here in the north, it is simply the joy of community and service.

Today I imagine the journey the quilts will take, from the cold north to a warehouse, into a container bound for a need somewhere in the world. Ukraine or Lebanon? Mali or Burkina Faso? I imagine them loaded onto a train or truck on its way to a port, part of the *Seafarers International House (SIH)* network. Baltimore? Newark? *Seafarers International House (SIH)*, the ELCA seafarers' ministry, has been that intersection where quilters from Bemidji, connect to a port chaplain, a seafarer, a dock worker loading up a container ship bound for somewhere across the Atlantic, through the Panama Canal, to places known and unknown.



Top: Did these crew members of the vessel Kian handle any quilts from Minnesota? Port chaplain Ruth Setaro had to bring them essentials as the water was too low to use the gangway. February 2023.

Left: A quilt. Photo by Candace Hunter from Pixabay.

For 150 years, hospitality and the welcome of strangers, support for seafarers and newcomers and refugees and immigrants, asylum seekers, this ministry has been a tapestry, a quilt, a piecing together of connection, support and a wayside rest. Perhaps some of the ancestors of these quilting women were assisted by SIH as they disembarked at Battery Park or Ellis Island, bound for a new home in a new land.

This is what interests me on a cold Thursday morning, how the stitches of these women, intersect with a dock worker, a seafarer, a port chaplain, an asylum seeker. This is why I continue to financially support this ministry and serve on its board with great joy, imagining and underwriting the hope, the intersections of strangers around the globe, all uniquely made possible through SIH. ⚓

MISSION & PEOPLE SERVED

Seafarers International House (SIH) is the Lutheran response to the urgent needs of vulnerable seafarers and immigrants. SIH offers pastoral/spiritual care, hospitality, social work assistance, and advocacy to a multi-national and multi-faith community in four ports currently (Albany, Baltimore, New Haven, New York & New Jersey), and in NYC. In 2022, SIH served 19,943 people. This includes boarding 1,368 vessels, visiting 15,135 seafarers and delivering 2,915 Christmas-at-Sea satchels assembled by volunteers. SIH also provided 2,301 lodging nights in Manhattan for seafarers and asylum seekers. 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.

THANK YOU, EVA AND MELVA

Earlier this year, we were pleasantly surprised that Eva C. Swanson (1926-2022) and Melva Pauline Hosfelt Roland (1929-2023) remembered SIH in their wills.

Both ladies were faithful supporters, giving each year what they could, but they did not officially join our Homeport Society. Their legacy gifts may become part of the endowment ensuring that the next generation of seafarers and immigrants can count on SIH's support.

Please consider adding SIH to your will. Alternatively, you might set up charitable gift annuity, a simple contract between you and the ELCA Foundation (or another foundation or trust). In exchange for making a gift to benefit Seafarers International House, you will receive regular (quarterly, semi-annual, or annual) fixed payments for your lifetime and, if you desire, for the lifetime of your spouse or another person. SIH receives the remainder of your gift.

You receive a **tax deduction** at the time the charitable gift annuity is established. A portion of each payment is tax-free in most cases.

You may also think about joining our Light-house Keepers monthly giving program to help those in need. Just click the "donate" button on our website (www.sihnyc.org) and choose your amount and frequency.

If you have remembered SIH, please let us know so that we may acknowledge you accordingly and add you to our Homeport Society. To do so or for any assistance, please contact Henryk, Director of Development. You can reach him at (212) 677-4800 ext. 7203 or henryk@sihnyc.org. 

Eva (left) was an active member of Augustana Lutheran Church in Omaha, NE.

Melva was an active member of Trinity Lutheran Church in Connellsville, PA, where she lived her entire life. She did not have a photo published.



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As *Seafarers International House* emerges from the pandemic we move forward in our mission by leasing out our flagship building to a not-for-profit partner that aligns with our work. This helps us to focus on our original purpose: to care for the urgent needs of vulnerable seafarers and asylum seekers. Therefore, we are no longer taking reservations for accommodations from the general public for either rooms or meeting space. We still receive your mail.

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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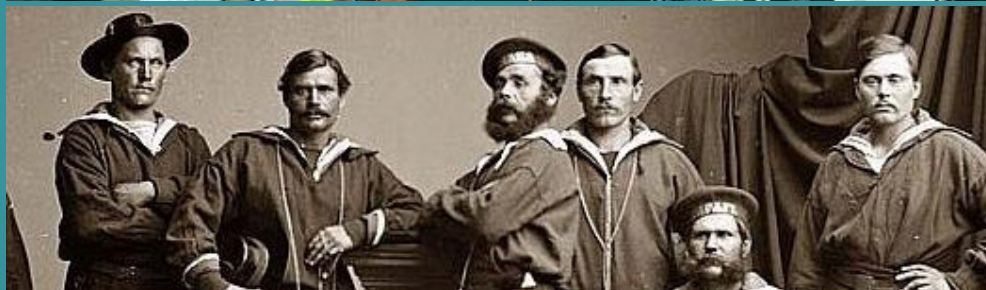
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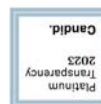
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THANK YOU, EVA AND MELVA



Demographics of seafarers may have changed in the past 150 years, SIH's services have remained a constant.
Top: Seafarers including two female cadets were transported by Port Chaplain Ruth Setaro, who took the photo
in May 2022. Bottom photo: 19th Century American seafarers. Maritime History from Aloft.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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150 YEARS

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