

PORTCALL

Seafarers International House

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: PIECE OF YOUR HEART

Our Clinical Pastoral Education Seminary student this past summer, Zachary Dean, shared with me this most memorable story. He had spent a large part of his day transporting Filipino seafarers to various points: some wanted to go shopping, some to the Statue of Liberty and some to New York City.

After dropping off a few seafarers to the train bound for Manhattan, he went back to Liberty State Park to retrieve a few seafarers who were en-

joying some much-needed R&R there. As he returned them to their ship he was asked the question of questions: "Why do you care so much about us?" Zach was a little taken aback and not sure how, initially, to answer.

So he clarified their question. They were inquiring why someone who doesn't get "paid" by them to assist them would care so much about people he has never met. Zach replied "As Christians we teach through example to others about the faith we have in

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.

(Romans 8: 26)

God through Jesus. But I don't always need words to do that for me. My faith motivates me to simply care about people."

Zach then went on to say that his wish was for the seafarers to have a piece of his heart as they departed for the next port. In response, the seafarers replied "We want you to have a piece of our hearts as well." Zach was inspired by this reciprocal exchange of worship while three seafarers were leaning against his van. The hot tarmac on a ship port is not typical "church," but it is holy ground that they shared together, blessing each other with unexpected words... and non-words... of the heart. ⚓



Crew members of the Helsinki Bridge with Clinical Pastoral Education Summer Intern Zachary Dean and SIH Executive Director Pastor Marsh Luther Drege. Photo by Henryk Behnke.



Marsh Luther Drege

ASYLEE SAM'S STORY

Written by Eric Porter and Kevin Tuerff

Meeet Sam. After seven long months in a run-down corporate-run immigration detention center (jail) near Newark Airport, a US Immigration Judge recently granted asylum to Sam, a foreigner from Africa we befriended there last November. An immigration judge issued a written order granting asylum, but it took four days before he would be released into the empty warehouse district at night, on short notice.

In June, Sam took his first breath of fresh air, and finally saw the sun for the first time in seven months. After we took him out to a celebratory dinner, he was able to video chat with his worried wife and three eldest children back in Africa, and see his newborn baby boy for the first time.

Last October, he was forced to flee his home and leave them behind because a vigilante group wanted him dead. If the judge had denied

In 2018, SIH provided 28 asylees with 1,182 nights of lodging and social assistance free of charge.

Sam's asylum case, he would have been deported to his home country, and thus handed a potential death sentence. Expert testimony during his immigration hearing verified there is no way he could return home without being discovered by the vigilantes.

He came to America because he sought safety from religious persecution. Conditions inside the immigration jail are so poor, he delighted in getting one hour per week in the visitation area



Sam flanked by SIH Board Member and detention center volunteer visitor Leslie Neve (left) and 2018 Summer Social Worker Intern Naz Seenauth. Photo by Henryk Behnke.

from Kevin, his first friend in America.

Other visitors soon followed organized by Seafarers International House' detention center visitation program. The visitations were a warmer, quieter and friendlier place than the 40-person dorm under a tin roof warehouse where he spent days and many sleepless nights on a plastic cot. Sam was known as "Mr. Good Man" by fellow detainees because he believed in performing acts of kindness to other detainees. He'd use his small commissary funds to buy food for others, talk with detainees who were disliked, and pray with men from different countries and faiths.

Sam came to the US with only \$1,000, but somehow it was lost or stolen while he was initially being interviewed by US Immigration agents at the airport.

Sam is only free because of American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) and White and Williams, LLP, a New York City law firm which donated their services to help him with his case in immigration court. Eric Porter led a team of other volunteer attorneys who don't specialize in immigration. Like Kevin, they just wanted to help. An AILA attorney provided technical consulting to Eric and his team about immigration law.

Thanks to a referral from First Friends of NJ/NY, he stayed with Seafarers International House (SIH), which provided him with free lodging, food and Metro cards, and assistance through SIH Social Work Intern Naz Seenauth. In early September, after only 69 days at Seafarers International House, Sam was able to move into his own place and found a part-time job.

Many individuals provided furniture and cash gifts through a crowdfunding site organized by Eric and Kevin. Yet, the struggle continues as his next big challenge is to reunite his wife and family from Africa. They are still living in fear of the vigilantes and face unpaid hospital bills from the birth of the newborn baby.

What is remarkable is just four days after he was granted his freedom, Sam returned to the detention center as a visitor to support other detainees. He hopes to start a legacy of detainees supporting each other, during and after detention, and be a mentor to other asylees at Seafarers International House.

In addition to individuals that helped and continue to assist Sam, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York and Church of Saint Francis Xavier and their members deserve credit. 



2018 honorees Philip W.J. Fisher (left) and Bill Van Loo (right) with Pastor Marsh Drege. Members of the US Coast Guard Academy's Glee Club (center). Photos by Henryk Behnke.

THURSDAY, APRIL 25, 2019, 6 – 10PM

19TH ANNUAL SETTING THE COURSE BANQUET

Join us for our fundraiser that supports our Port Mission that serves about 27,000 seafarers each year. All funds raised provide for the salaries of our seven chaplains in the ports of Connecticut, New Jersey & New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore. They board ships offering Wi-Fi-connectivity, SIM cards, magazines, and literature to all regardless of faith or nationality. They also take mariners who have visas to the mall or medical facilities, all free of charge.

At the banquet, we award shipping industry representatives who have helped improve the welfare of seafarers. This year's recipients of the Outstanding Friend of Seafarers Award are:

Kathleen "Kate" Hunt, Vice President, SIU Government Services Division



SIU is the largest North American union representing merchant mariners. It is a dynamic, politically active organization dedicated to protecting the membership's job security by constantly staying a step ahead of the ever-changing needs of the industry. Through her leadership at SIU, as board member of North American Maritime Ministry Association, and as former board member of Seafarers International House, Kate has been significantly advancing seafarers' welfare for almost four decades.

Lois K. Zabrocky, President & Chief Executive Officer, International Seaways



International Seaways had its start as a family company. Its core values of operational and environmental excellence are built upon the loyalty of its 40 shore side and 1,600 sea staff. That loyalty is nurtured through trust and welfare. "We rely on our seafarers to carry our mission of excellence to each port that they visit. We care deeply for each seafarer and their family. Through cadet programs in three countries that have fostered a significant number of our senior officers, health and welfare programs that care for the seafarer and their extended family, and outreach programs in times of need, we look to build and enrich our Seaways family every day." Lois, in her 28 years with the company and its predecessors, leads by example. She was joined by her 2 children to bring gifts and celebrate Christmas Eve on the Seaways Shenandoah.

Enrico "Ricky" Esopa, SIU's ITF Coordinator for the U.S. East Coast



The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is a global organization of transport workers in 670 trade unions in some 147 countries, collectively

representing 19.7 million working men and women in all transport sectors. The ITF passionately campaigns for transport workers' rights, equality and justice. The Seafarers' Section of the ITF work is to ensure safe vessels, decent working conditions, raise standards, protect the vulnerable and eradicate exploitation of mariners. This work is done through a network of Inspectors and Coordinators around the world, to which Ricky has dedicated a better part of his career. The SIU is an Affiliate of the ITF.

Bill Woodhour, President & Chief Executive Officer, Maersk Line, Limited



"At Maersk we define corporate sustainability as working systematically

to reduce negative and enhance positive impacts on people, society and the environment. We further aim to unlock growth for society and our company by leveraging the core strengths of our businesses to address global challenges through innovation, investment and collaboration." Since 1991, Bill has been working with Maersk on achieving these goals.

To get your tickets (\$600 pp) today call (212) 677-4800 ext. 1203, email henryk@sihnyc.org or visit www.sihnyc.org/upcoming-events.



Crew members at work. Will their voyage take them through pirate-infested waters? Photo courtesy of Seafarers International Union (SIU).

RISK OF SEAFARING: PIRACY

By Henryk Behnke

To this day, piracy is a real threat to seafarers, especially those on vessels in the Gulf of Guinea, which has become the world's piracy hot spot. Of 16 incidents in which ships came under gunfire in 2017, seven were in these waters, which stretch 3,541 miles from Senegal to Angola. It is amazing, how little the general public knows about these horrific incidents.

For example, last September twelve crew members of the Swiss ship MV Glarus were kidnapped. The ship had been transporting wheat from Lagos to Port Harcourt, in southern Nigeria, when it was hijacked off Nigeria's Bonny Island. The pirates belonged to the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta. The goal of these pirates is to ensure the region's population receives a larger share of the country's oil and gas revenues.

After more than a month of negotiations

between the ship owner and the kidnapers, the pirates released the twelve hostages that included seven Filipinos, a Bosnian, a Croatian, a Romanian, a Slovenian and a Ukrainian. The good news was almost immediately overshadowed by the next kidnapping, when pirates boarded the container ship MV Pomerania Sky off the coast of Nigeria, seizing eleven crew including eight from Poland in late October. It took until December for them to be released.

Trained and with years of experience in dealing with traumatized people, SIH port chaplains are often the first civilian counsellors that crew members confide in after tragedies like being kidnapped or witnessing a fellow crew member drown. They help seafarers process and deal with the trauma caused by horrific events. The port chaplains are a blessing for many in times of crisis. 



A seafarer working in a safe port. Photo courtesy of Seafarers International Union (SIU).

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.

CHRISTMAS-AT-SEA: A HOLIDAY INITIATIVE

Thanks to over 100 youth and senior groups, businesses and congregations in addition to countless individuals, our seven port chaplains delivered 1,853 satchels. You should have seen the look on the seafarers' faces as they appreciated the warm clothing and heart-warming Christmas and Holiday greeting cards from total strangers.

This page shows some of the volunteers and happy recipients. Please consider participating in 2019. For more information or to sign up, contact us:

For New England: Email Ruth Setaro (ruthsetaro@snet.net) or call her at 203-687-2177.

All other regions: Email Jeni Janis (jeni@sihnyc.org) or call her at 212-677-4800 (ext. 1218). Or mail satchels or your donation marked "Christmas-at-Sea" to: Seafarers International House, 123 East 15th Street, New York, NY 10003.

Or visit www.SIHNYC.org to find out more or to make a donation online. 



Christmas-At-Sea volunteers of Faith Lutheran Church, East Hartford, CT with SIH Port Chaplain Ruth Setaro (left).



Top: Brenda Krouse, Bob Bradford, Upper Susquehanna Synod Bishop Barbara J. Collins and SIH Port Chaplain Bill Rex load a record 670 satchels into two vans. Photo by Marsh Drege.
Bottom: Beaming seafarers show off their Christmas-At-Sea satchels and shopping bags. Photo by Port Chaplain Ruth Setaro.

1,853 crew members regardless of their faith or nationality received their satchels filled with a sweatshirt, socks, a T-shirt, a knitted cap, nuts or chocolate and a Holiday Greeting Card.



Around Christmas, Port Chaplain Ruth Setaro met this happy seafarer.

PROGRAMS & EVENTS

In Their Words: Right of Asylum Reception 2018 Friends of Immigrants



On October 23, 2018, 78 supporters enjoyed cocktails at the Right of Asylum Reception and mingled with some of the 28 asylees SIH provided lodging for in 2018. Pictured from left to right are SIH guest asylee Sam, SIH Executive Director Marsh Drege, 2018 Friends of Immigrants awardees Congressman Adriano Espaillat and Ravi Ragbir, and asylee and author Edafe Okporo. Photo by Henryk Behnke.

ADRIANO ESPAILLAT

Congress member, New York's 13th District

"I am delighted to receive Seafarers International House's Friend of Immigrants Award and vow to continue to fight the hate-based rhetoric and anti-immigrant policies from this administration and will champion our efforts to protect the rights of people seeking protection from persecution and asylum here in the United States."

RAVI RAGBIR

Executive Director, New Sanctuary Coalition of New York

Ravi Ragbir applauded Seafarers International House's work with immigrants and reminded the audience to look past their fears. "We all have limitations. But when our society is at risk, when our lives are at risk.... We need to break those restraints. ... Instead of being terrified ... let's take that terror that we are facing, let's channel it, let's change it, ... Let's speak up. We have the right to free speech." ⚓

Event: Sunset Cruise

Over 88 people attended the Sunset Cruise aboard the Pilot Boat New York benefiting The Marine Society of the City of New York and Seafarers International House on September 18, 2018. The fundraising event was sponsored by the Sandy Hook Pilots Association. ⚓



Sunset Cruisers and loyal friends of Seafarers International House Carolyn Wagner and Susan Bell. 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 serving a total of about 29,000 people including over 17,000 seafarers visited and almost 6,000 lodging nights for seafarers, asylees, and domestic violence and local disaster victims. 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.

NOT A GOOD START TO THE YEAR

By Christopher V. Roehrer

On **New Year's Eve** the SINCERITY ACE, a 651 ft. Panamanian-flagged auto carrier caught fire halfway between Japan and Hawaii. The ship had to be abandoned 2,000 miles NW of Hawaii. 16 crew members were rescued, four were found perished in the water, and the last seafarer was not recovered. The ship is under tow to Japan.

On **January 2** 270 containers fell off the Panamanian-flagged MSC ZOE, one of the world's largest container ships, during a North Sea storm and washed up off the coast of the Netherlands. There were no injuries to the crew, but one or more container boxes held hazardous organic peroxide.

On **January 3** several containers aboard the YANTIAN EXPRESS, a 1,053 ft. German-flagged container ship caught fire 800 miles from Canada. All 24 crew members were evacuated and are safe. The ship is being towed to Halifax.

On **January 7** an unnamed Panamanian-flagged coal ship sank in the Black Sea, 92 miles off the Turkish coast. Six crew members perished and the remaining seven were rescued.

On **January 8** the AULAC FORTUN, an empty, Vietnamese-flagged oil tanker exploded and caught fire just off Hong Kong's Lamma Island, appar-

ently from an accumulation of flammable gas. One seafarer perished, 23 were rescued and one is missing. The ship shows no signs of sinking or leaking oil.

On **January 14** the STAR CENTURION, a Vanuatu-flagged undersea cable and pipe-laying ship, capsized in the Indonesian waters of the Singapore Straits after having been struck broadside by a much larger oil tanker on Sunday. All 22 crew members were able to abandon ship and enter lifeboats before it capsized without injury.

On **January 22** two Tanzanian-flagged oil tankers, the MAESTRO and the CANDY, caught fire while transferring fuel mid-sea after one vessel was barred from using its usual port in southern Russia due to U.S. sanctions risk. 14 seafarers from ship perished, 12 were rescued and the remaining six are missing.

In a period of 22 days, 33 seafarer lives were lost – 1.5 individuals per day!

We're left to wonder, in the case of auto carriers, whether improvements aren't needed in the way vehicles are presented for carriage. We're left to wonder, in the case of coal carriers and oil tankers, whether improvements aren't needed in surface ventilation to circumvent the build-up of flammable

gases. We're left to wonder, in the case of container ships, whether the improvements aren't needed to validate the contents of container boxes. Lastly, we're left to wonder, at what point ships become too big to be operated safely. ⚓

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rev. Dr. Dennis A. Anderson

Rev. Tracie L. Bartholomew[†]

Keith J. Billotti, Esq.

Stephen A. Bennett

Paul K. Erbes

Harry Forse

Rev. James E. Hazelwood[†]

Mary B. Heller

Kelly Kandler

Capt. Paul A. Klein

Kevin Kunkle¹

Edith Lohr

Rev. Linda Manson

Rev. Donald McCoid[†]

Jacquelyn Mize-Baker

Dr. Daniel Molloy⁰

Leslie A. Neve²

John M. Ogren³

Matthew D. O'Rear

Rev. Joshua Rinas

Rev. E. Roy Riley

Capt. Richard Schoenlank⁴

Jacob Shisha

Rev. Susan E. Tjornehoj

Jennifer R. Vizina⁵

Blythe Miller Vogel, Esq.

Rev. Margay Jo Whitlock⁶

1. Treasurer

2. Secretary

3. Member at Large

4. Vice President

5. Member at Large

6. President

† Ex Officio

0 Advisory Member

PORTCALL

Seafarers International House

IN THIS ISSUE

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: PIECE OF YOUR HEART

ASYLEE SAM'S STORY

19TH ANNUAL SETTING THE COURSE BANQUET

RISK OF SEAFARING: PIRACY

CHRISTMAS-AT-SEA INITIATIVE

IN THEIR WORDS: RIGHT OF ASYLUM RECEPTION HONOREES

NOT A GOOD START TO THE YEAR



Crew members of the Nord Galaxy receiving their SIH Christmas-At-Sea satchels in December 2018. Inside each bag are a knitted hat, scarf, socks, a T-shirt, a hoody, nuts or chocolate, and holiday greetings all prepared by generous volunteers. Photo by Rev. K. Robert Schmitt, SIH Port Chaplain, Baltimore.

Design by: www.kristasdesignstudio.com



An Affiliate of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

123 East 15th Street
New York, NY 10003-3557
212-677-4800
www.SIHNYC.org

Seafarers International House



NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
NEW YORK, NY
PERMIT NO. 8027