

PORTCALL

Seafarers International House

MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: HOME, SWEET (TEMPORARY) HOME

Starting October 1, *Seafarers International House* (SIH) will be headquartered in a new temporary home complete with 10 guestrooms and offices. We are renting a floor at The Markle guesthouse run by the Salvation Army, a stone's throw from our original guesthouse at Union Square.

With unpredictable travel and pandemic regulations, we cannot run the guesthouse currently, and have therefore leased the building at least until December 31, 2021, to an organization that aligns with our mission of caring for individuals with transitional housing needs.

Extremely well situated to the PATH and many subway lines, our new temporary home on West 13th Street will enable us to directly assist our mission-based guests as they need to access health and government services in Manhattan.

That means that merchant mariners will be close to our original East 15th Street building to gain access to their lockers as well as being able to frequent their various doctors, Coast Guard and document procurement appointments. And our asylees will have ease of access to the various resources they need to get on their feet.

After 18 months of "living in tents", we have found a home, sweet temporary home, for the near future.

At the same time, our port chaplains are helping seafarers obtain lifesaving vaccines. Many hail from countries with high COVID-19 infection rates and extremely limited access to vaccines. Often we have heard how grateful these mariners are to be relatively safe from infection. One seafarer, Patel from India, who I transported to an immunization site recently told me *"I'm just so grateful that I can now re-enter the world again"*.

As the Holiday Season approaches, we know that many asylees and seafarers will be apart from family and friends, missing their homes. With our Christ-

"I'm just so grateful that I can now re-enter the world again"
- Seafarer Patel from India

mas-at-Sea initiative we can comfort at least some seafarers, who receive satchels filled with warm clothing (often knitted by volunteers), and holiday greetings, letting them know that we care for them and appreciate the sacrifices they make so that we and our loved ones can get the gifts produced on different continents.

I hope you will continue to help us make a home, sweet, home for asylees and seafarers. Peace, 

Marsh Luther Drege

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; stuck down, but not destroyed.

2 Corinthians 4:8-9



Pastor Marsh Drege at our new home, The Markle in Manhattan.

SPIRITUALITY: WOR"SHIP" FOR SEAFARERS

By Seafarers International House Port Chaplain Rev. Dr. K. Robert Schmitt, Port of Baltimore



On a Monday in July, I went into the port to do my normal day of visiting ships. My schedule was to go to four ships on our Brooklyn side of the harbor. When I got to my first stop the ship wasn't there. It had been delayed due to weather, so I moved on to my second stop the *Green K- Max 4* at Curtis Bay.

It was a crew of all Filipino sailors on a Greek managed ship sailing under the Liberian flag. When I went on board one sailor, Antonio, wanted to go to the Arundel Mall, so I waited to take him. While I waited another sailor and I talked. He was suffering from psoriasis. He asked if I would hold service for the crew which I agreed to.

As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. [Mark 6:34]

Sailors, like the crowd around Jesus are like sheep without a shepherd. They live a solitary life at times seeing only their fellow sailors and communicating home via email or old-fashioned letters. Yet they have the same needs and desires of all of us here on land. Life at sea is only a portion of life for them, but they often don't get to do what you and I do, come to worship and be refreshed.

When it came to doing worship, before the crew arrived, the cook came out with a special white tablecloth to prepare the altar, I placed my multicolored cloths and communion ware on the table, Antonio, who I had taken to the mall and was a former altar boy, as-



sisted and read the scripture from the preceding Sunday in his native Tagalog from the Bible I had given to him. The crew listened as I preached and then came forward for the Eucharist. At the end of the service, I pulled out the oil for anointing and asked the sailor who had shared about his disease to step forward for anointing, others from the crew came forward after him.

When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed. [Mark 6:53-56]

They recognized Jesus back in Galilee. The sailors recognized Jesus that Monday.

Scripture came alive not only on that ship but also here among you when you see scripture come alive in what we do. 

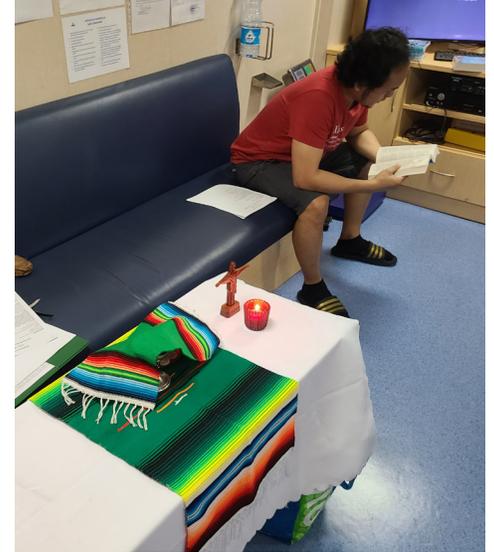


Photo credits: Top left: Port Chaplain Pr. Bob Schmitt by David Rider. Top right: Bulk Carrier Green K - Max 4 by Aegean Shipping. Right center and bottom: Seafarers worshipping, photo by Pr. Bob Schmitt.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2021, 5 – 7PM

2021 ANNUAL SETTING THE COURSE RECEPTION

We are pleased to finally host the 20th Setting the Course Reception, after skipping a year because of the pandemic. Thank you to all donors, who generously allowed us to change sponsorships and tickets into donations in 2020. At the time of printing this newsletter, we have to limit the event to 100 vaccinated people. **Please check the website for updates: www.sihnyc.org/upcoming-events or contact us at henryk@sihnyc.org or (212) 677-4800 ext. 7203. You may also make a donation to support the vaccination of seafarers without attending the event.**

The event is our major fundraiser and supports the Port Mission that served about 16,000 seafarers in 2020 (in a regular year over 28,000). All funds raised help provide for the salaries of five chaplains in the ports of Baltimore, New Haven, NJ & NY, and Philadelphia. We will honor shipping industry representatives who have improved the welfare of seafarers:

2020 Outstanding Friends of Seafarers:



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



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



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

2020 Special Recognition for Service to Seafarers:



Timothy J. Ferrie, President, The Marine Society of the City of New York and President of The Trustees of the Sailors' Snug Harbor in the City of New York

2021 Outstanding Friends of Seafarers:



Jacqueline Smith, Maritime Coordinator, International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)

Major Port Mission Event Supporters & Donors

2021 Major Event Supporters Only (as of Aug. 31, 2021)

Gold Level: American Maritime Congress (AMC); American Roll-on Roll-off Carrier (ARC) Group

Cocktails & Hors d'oeuvres: Philip W.J. and Suzanne C. Fisher

Silver Level: 2 x American Maritime Congress (AMC); International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)

Bronze Level: International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots (MM&P); Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association (MEBA); Marine Society of the City of NY; 2 x Seafarers International Union (SIU); Seward & Kissel; The Trustees of Sailors' Snug Harbor in the City of NY

2020 Event Donors & Major Contributors

The Trustees of the Sailors' Snug Harbor in the City of NY
New York Community Trust
Seafarers International Union (SIU)
German Society of the City of New York

American Maritime Officers (AMO); Anonymous; Kathryn and Erik Hanson; International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots (MM&P); ITF Seafarers' Trust; Joyce and Peter Jobson; Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association (MEBA); TK Foundation; Woman's Seaman's Friend Society of Connecticut

American Maritime Congress (AMC); Suzanne and Philip W.J. Fisher; International Seaways, TOTE Maritime Alaska

SEAFARERS INTERNATIONAL HOUSE IN THE NEWS

Selected excerpts from recent press coverage. Feel free to "Google" the complete articles.

Since last summer *Seafarers International House* (SIH) has advocated for seafarers to be recognized as "essential workers" during this pandemic. Recently, several media outlets covered the "crew change crisis" and plight of seafarers. Here are some excerpts:

DAILY BEAST

Coronavirus Nightmare at Sea for the World's Most Essential Workers

By Charissa Isidro, Social Media Editor, 03/20/21

"We were out of sight and out of mind," says Second Officer Jaisal Bhati. "Everybody forgot about us (and) everyone turned a blind eye." Behind the scenes of the coronavirus pandemic, an invisible workforce of about one million seafarers has continued to toil on bulk carriers, oil tankers, fishing vessels, cruise ships, and more. These people have crisscrossed the world, many working seven-day weeks with no holidays or even sick days delivering medicines, grain, coal, fuel—and now vaccines. "They wanted our services but they did not want us." ...

... **Pastor Marsh Drege**, an ordained minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, is one of many members of faith who serves in "maritime ministry." Rooted in centuries-old stereotypical views of sailors as violent, bad-mouthing, impulsive, sinful people, maritime ministry grew with the intent of proselytizing and spreading the Christian (or Catholic) religion.

Today, that's no longer the main purpose of maritime ministry—as port chaplains in North America sign memoranda vowing not to proselytize—but their influence

and presence has remained on the gangway.

"We are concerned with spirituality, but we work equally with Muslims, Jews, Christians" and others, says Drege, explaining that their main goal is to tend to the functional and individual needs of seafarers. "Our chaplains, our maritime ministers, are there to listen and counsel and pray with them."

Now, the usual anxieties of seafarers have been made exponentially worse by the uncertainty of the pandemic. Though many felt compelled to work at the beginning of the pandemic as their form of service for the world's greater good, the lack of transparency concerning their future on board left many distraught. While disappearances and deaths at sea often go unreported, a spate of suicides among seafarers—including six cruise workers in the month of May—demonstrates the fatal effects of a depressed and hopeless crew amid an unending crisis. Just recently, an Indian seafarer trapped aboard MSC's bulker *Anastasia* off the coast of China attempted suicide after languishing on board eight months past his original contract's expiration, and his most recent pleas to return home were refused.

"I've personally had people call me from all over the world, all times of day, just wanting to talk," Drege says. "It has really increased during the pandemic... I talked to a seafarer almost every day in August, because they were in the Middle East, and they couldn't get off the ship. They couldn't go anywhere. They were basically prisoners."

Faith-based organizations like the **Seafarers International House** have

long worked closely with unions and advocacy groups to bring help to seafarers and when the coronavirus drastically limited the number of people interacting at ports, chaplains were often the one line of relief, bringing whatever practical items were needed to the gangway.

"Seafarers will contact [our chaplains], usually through WhatsApp, and will ask them to pick up something at a store, or they will order things on the internet to the chaplain's home," **Drege** explains. "One of our chaplains has spent \$20,000 a month on just buying things, that he is just trusting the seafarers will reimburse him."

He recalls asking one chaplain: "Do you ever get stiffed?" and being told "Never. It's never happened." That, says Drege, "really shows the trust and the relationships that happen between our chaplains and our seafarers."

The reality of the pandemic has not only pushed **Drege** to find ways to support seafarers but also has helped him appreciate their situation, he said: "I've developed more empathy for what seafarers go through all the time—isolation, and loneliness. We all have been on lockdown, we all know now what that's like."

While one might assume that special consideration would be given to seafarers, since they, you know, deliver basically every imaginable thing that we need in order to live our lives, they've been almost completely ignored even for the most basic of needs. All the while, the [government] entities tasked with enforcing regulations and protecting seafarers did next to nothing. 

Bloomberg

Cooped Up on Ships, World's Seafarers Get Vaccines in the U.S.

By Brendan Murray, 06/02/21

Imagine spending the past year locked down. At the office. With colleagues, 24-7. With intermittent Wi-Fi at best, no holidays. And your job involves catering to the richest countries' demand for stuff — from Pelotons to patio furniture, computer monitors to Crocs. That's been the hard life of hundreds of thousands of seafarers during the pandemic, and it's far from over. But now some of them are getting a dose of hope.

Maritime workers arriving on U.S. shores on container ships, tankers and other cargo carriers are being offered vaccines by local health officials, non-profits and volunteer groups. The world's biggest economy has the shots in relative abundance. Many deckhands and officers hail from countries like India and the Philippines, where the availability is uncertain. So they're eager to get an inoculation.

....
"Ideally, state health departments should be able to board ships to vaccinate seafarers, the invisible essential workers throughout this pandemic, who sacrifice so much to keep our supply chains moving," said **Marsh Drege**, pastor and executive director of the **Seafarers International House** in New York. ...

TradeWinds
The Global Shipping News Source

Toll unclear as latest wave of Covid-19 brings risk to seafarers

By Michael Juliano, 06/25/21

While seafarers' challenges as a result of Covid-19's impact on crew change is widely known, the pandemic is also affecting them in another way.



Port Chaplain Ruth Setaro (right) took these mariners to the vaccination site in New Haven, CT.

The latest wave of the disease is also proving more dangerous to seafarers than earlier phases of the pandemic, leading to increasing reports of seafarer fatalities.

Port chaplains from New York-based **Seafarers International House**, which aids mariners in ports in the US northeast, have heard of seafarers succumbing to Covid-19 during their socially distanced gangway ship visits. "They reported fatalities on board and that some seafarers were scared as the cause of death was never determined," the non-profit organisation told TradeWinds.

Although there is little clarity over the total number of deaths at sea from Covid-19, the losses are no less significant.

NEW HAVEN REGISTER

New Haven nurses called 'fearless' in vaccinating tanker crews so they can 'finally go home'

By Kate Farrish, Health I-Team Writer, 07/02/21

... In another effort that started in May, **Ruth Setaro**, the port chaplain in New

Haven for **Seafarers International House**, has driven about 40 crew members who have valid U.S. visas and shore passes to local pharmacies to get vaccinated.

From Russia, Ukraine, the Philippines, Myanmar and India, the crew members have told her about their plight.

"They've been so isolated, but they're also worried that if they left the ships, they might get COVID and get sick and die," **Setaro** said. "Once they're vaccinated, they may be able to finally go home."

WQXR ::

Morning host Jeff Spurgeon of WQXR, the classical radio station, mentioned how our port chaplains help seafarers get vaccinated.

Listen to the 2-minute clip on our web site and learn how else you can be championing for seafarers:

www.sihnyc.org/

championingforseafarers 

WHY I SERVE ON THE BOARD: “SEEING THE UNSEEN”

By Seafarers International House Board Member Rev. Susan Tjornehoj

Growing up on the Front Range of the Colorado Rockies, I was thousands of miles away from the nearest port. Fort Carson Army Base and the Air Force Academy, close neighbors, kept this little girl grounded or looking to the skies, never anticipating the arrival of a tanker or a container ship. Water was a precious commodity there, thawing glaciers provided beaver ponds and cascading creeks, while watering lawns was possible only certain days of the week. I was 12-years-old the first time I saw a ship and boarded my first ferry while visiting family in Denmark.

Yet water and ships and oceans and the seafarers, the most precious and unseen cargo, *Seafarer's International House (SIH)* are now part of our Estate Plan.

As people of faith we often speak boldly of things seen and unseen. The ministry of SIH literally sees the world's unseen, whether domestic seafarers awaiting their next assignment, asylum seekers or tending to the crews of massive ships arriving in port. SIH makes known the lives of those at sea, sojourners, those unknown.

As a college student, I lived, studied and worked for a while in Hamburg, Germany. My workplace was a Schiffsausrüstung, Hagen und Co., which was a major marine equipment company. It was there that I became aware of the global connections made possible through the shipping industry. A first call along the Bering Sea coast, then to a Midwestern setting of churches supporting a fresh water port ministry to now living near the Port of Baltimore, the ministries serving the precious cargo of this massive global enterprise, the seafarers themselves, are spiritually, ethically and economically of vital importance.

A recent drive across country, dodging semi after semi-truck, I imagined each of the ships that had first carried the cargo now being driven somewhere that carried your new car or truck, the clothes that we wear, the utensils in the kitchen drawer, the components of your laptop and phone.

SIH provides a connection, a link of compassionate connection, a human touch, a tender and powerful thread which binds us together. In this time of pandemic which revealed the precarious lives of those at sea, which has impacted the guesthouse and the ministry of SIH, what a privilege it is to serve on this board whose vision is laser-focused on the mission, on seeing the unseen and providing for the stranger among us.

Your knitted cap, a prayer, a financial gift, making SIH part of your legacy giving, is part of God's work of making visible what is invisible, seeing what is unseen.

Now as I take my daily walk/run around Fort McHenry in Baltimore and watch the ships come into port, I envision those on board, away from their families for most of a year, the precious cargo, that through your generosity is welcomed to port and seen as children of God. It just doesn't get any better than this, does it?! 🚢



A seafarer joyfully displays a reusable Christmas-at-Sea satchel and proudly wears the knitted hat and scarf from a generous volunteer delivered in December 2019 by Port Chaplain Luisito Destreza (left).

CHRISTMAS-AT-SEA INITIATIVE

It is not too early to start planning for the Holiday Season 2021.

To participate and to find knit patterns visit

www.sihnyc.org/christmas-at-sea
or contact Jeni, jeni@sihnyc.org

Sponsored, in part, by

International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots (MM&P)

ITF Seafarers' Trust

Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association (MEBA)

Seafarers International Union (SIU)

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 almost 20,000 people including over 14,000 seafarers visited and over 2,000 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: 86% of our revenue is spent on programs, only 14% on administration and fundraising.

BECOME A LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER

You can join our Lighthouse Keeper monthly automated giving program to reliably support our work with seafarers and immigrants by making modest monthly donation that add up and help us provide excellent service. Just click the donate button on our website (www.sihnyc.org) and choose your amount and frequency.

You may also remember the need of seafarers and immigrants in your estate planning. Just name Seafarers & International House, Inc. as a beneficiary of your 401(k), IRA or other qualified retirement plan. All you have to do is sign a paper or online form from your plan administrator and designate Seafarers & International House, Inc. (Federal ID: 13-5562413) as a full, partial or contingent beneficiary.

For assistance please contact Henryk Behnke, Director of Development & Communications. You can reach him at (212) 677-4800 ext. 7203 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 or as a Lighthouse Keeper and will list you in the annual report. 



Why don't you join Barbara and SIH board member and former Nebraska Bishop Rev. Dr. Dennis Anderson, here flanked by Marsh Drege and Lucas Mietlowski at a pre-pandemic visit, as a Lighthouse Keeper and/or in the Homeport Society?

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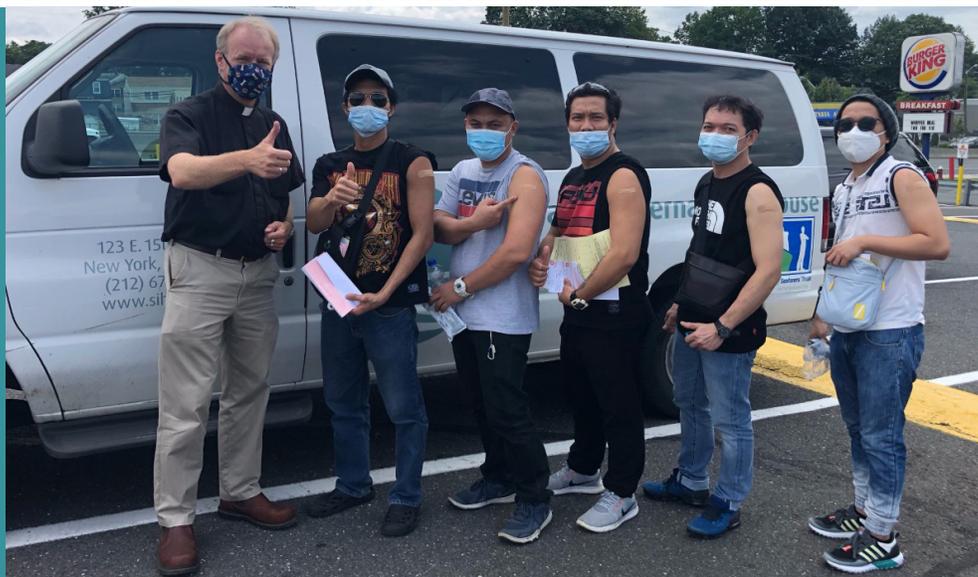
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- † Ex Officio
- 0 Advisory Member

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Seafarers International House is temporarily closed to the public at least until December 31, 2021. We do receive your mail. Please check www.sihnyc.org for updates or email your inquiry to res@sihnyc.org or call us at (212) 677-4800.

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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BECOME A LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER

Port Chaplain Pastor Arnd Braun-Storck transported these seafarers to the COVID-19 vaccination site in the Port of NJ & NY, so that they may travel back to their homeland protected. These vaccination efforts are supported by ITF Seafarers' Trust, New Jersey Synod and German Society of NYC and your donations.

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America 

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