

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Maritime Ministries Help Celebrate World Maritime Day

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On October 25th chaplains from the North American Maritime Ministry Association (NAMMA) joined with International Maritime Organization (IMO), the USCG and industry representatives to observe World Maritime Day. This year's IMO theme is the environment and how maritime shipping can contribute to its restoration.

The opening worship service held at St. James Church in New York City featured the Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts-Schori as the preacher. Here are some excerpts from the Presiding Bishop's homily:

The wonders of God's good creation, and the need we still have to make our living by the sweat of our brow, bring us here today to give thanks for the ministry of mariners, to pray for their safety, and to encourage all of us to care even more deeply for this wondrous planet on which we dwell.... The International Maritime Organization's focus this year is on healing the transportation base on which the whole maritime industry depends – or, rather, floats. That watery support has been polluted with oil and sewage, plastic and old ships, and the air above it is increasingly filled with gases that are contributing to warming the whole planet... Jesus called those disciples, as he continues to call us, to tell people not only that God is among us and seeking relationship with us, but that we have something to do in response – to heal, cure, restore, make whole.... You and I have the ability to begin to heal this earth. When the first human beings were charged with dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every living thing that moves on the earth, God did not intend for us to abuse those gifts, but to use and care well for them, so that they might continue to be a blessing for all God's creation. Our own lives, and those of our descendants, depend on how we care for the whole. Will we bless God in our stewardship of this earth, and bless all its inhabitants in the process? Or will we ignore our neighbors and foul this watery garden?

NAMMA presented its Seafarers Salute Award for Excellence in Shipping to ExxonMobil/SeaRiver and the Joe Gerson Humanitarian Award to Lloyd's List's Julian Bray, Michael Grey and Rajesh Joshi for their tireless work on behalf of seafarers the world over. The awards were given to the recipients by IMO Secretary-General Efthimios Mitropoulos. In making his presentation, Secretary-General Mitropoulos remarked "...in a world in which seafarers are increasingly faced with a challenging working regimen; with the prospect of prosecution or incarceration even, occasionally, when caught up unwittingly in accidents beyond their control; with increasing commercial pressures and even with the threat of physical attack from pirates and armed robbers, it is a great comfort to many that organizations such as NAMMA exist to concern themselves with the pastoral care of seafarers and the spiritual,

physical and legal challenges they face in the conduct of their jobs. That is why these awards are so important, and why the recipients deserve the special merit that I know we all afford them.”

The final event was the formation of the North American Marine Environment Protection Association (NAMEPA). “Whether we believe in global warming or just recognize that man’s impact on our planet needs to be addressed, the time is now for our industry to work together in creating solutions”, stated NAMEPA’s Founding Chairman Clay Maitland and Managing Partner of International Registries Inc, which manages the Marshall Island’s ship registry, now the world’s 4th largest. “Protecting our marine environment is an opportunity to reverse existing trends and activities, and begin to work cooperatively towards what is good for all-not just a few. It is an opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to preserving the seas in which we ply our trade and upon which we depend for our livelihoods.” In recognizing the significance of the organization’s founding, IMO Secretary-General Efthimios Mitropoulos stated “We have to approach this issue [of environment protection] with a **sense of partnership** and, if we can help to instill in everyone, not just younger people, a sense of how important it is that we work towards a cleaner, greener world, then so much the better... By establishing the **North American MEPA** you are showing your commitment to that cause and you have, I am certain, the wholehearted support of IMO, the maritime community, the people of North America and, indeed, of the wider world, for doing so.”

The key element to implementing NAMEPA’s mission is through the Church’s maritime ministries. NAMMA’s port chaplains will be the vehicle for passing along educational materials to several million seafarers who visit North American Ports each year, along with the port communities in which they serve.

Fr. Von Dreele serves as the Vice President of NAMMA and will be its representative on NAMEPA’s founding board. For more information about the Seamen’s Church Institute of Philadelphia and South Jersey, go to www.sciphiladelphia.org.