



# The Anchor

Seamen's Church  
Institute  
of Philadelphia and South Jersey

Spring 2018

*A window into the ministry to seafarers who keep global commerce flowing*

## From the Executive Director

Helene Pierson, Executive Director

### The Winds of Change are Blowing...

Dear Friends,

This year we have been telling our supporters at our events and our volunteers who participated our new in-depth ship visitor training program about the four eras of service to seafarers. With this year being our 175<sup>th</sup> year, we are reflecting back a bit, while making sure we are setting the stage for a sound future.



When we first started our mission back in 1843 with a floating church on the river that lasted for six years, the mission was about protection of and evangelism to the seafarer. From the mid 19<sup>th</sup> to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the mission was about advocacy and hospitality at a time when seafarers were in port much longer than they are today, and not very protected while at sea with sound working conditions and not much protection from being shorted on wages, and sometimes not paid at all. From the mid 20<sup>th</sup> into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, seafarer centers had swimming pools and soccer fields, and we even had dances for the seafarers. Today, with technology creating short stays in port, and security concerns and work schedules due to crew sizes that keep getting smaller limiting the down time while in a port, we are about welcoming the seafarers and assessing whether there are any specific concerns—medical, emotional, or conditional, delivering communications so that seafarers can connect with loved ones while in port, and transportation for those that can get a few hours shore leave.

While we aren't experiencing a major change to service to seafarers right now, we are at the end of a couple of major eras at SCI. On April 30<sup>th</sup>, Mesfin Ghebrevoldi, who has been the dedicated lead of our operations serving seafarers for 39 years, will retire. Mesfin's retirement has been misreported in print in the past. This time it is the real deal. His passion, diligence, and don't put off to tomorrow what you can do for the seafarer today style will be a big adjustment at SCI. All are most welcome for some refreshment to bid him adieu on April 30<sup>th</sup> at our current headquarters. More information is enclosed inside this newsletter.

And speaking of headquarters, SCI will move to the Navy Yard on July 1<sup>st</sup>. We will communicate in more detail about our move soon. Meanwhile, please continue to support us in our last few months in Northern Liberties, and please do plan to find us when we move. In our new location, parking is going to be welcoming and plentiful!

And so, as I write this while the winds of winter are taking their final bows, we are looking forward to Spring and our exciting future as we continue to serve our mission to seafarers.

Thank you for being with us on this journey.

Sincerely,

Helene Pierson

Gifts from people like you allow us to minister to 35,000 seafarers annually. Please consider a gift to SCI. You may use the envelope included or visit us online at [www.sciphiladelphia.org](http://www.sciphiladelphia.org). For gifts of stock, contact Christine Polit at 215-940-9900 x 104 or [cpolit@sciphiladelphia.org](mailto:cpolit@sciphiladelphia.org)

## **NJ Sen. Stephen M. Sweeney Emotionally Receives SCI's 'Spirit of the Port Award' at Annual Luncheon**

A visibly moved New Jersey State Sen. Stephen M. Sweeney on March 9 gratefully received the 2018 annual Spirit of the Port Award conferred by Seamen's Church Institute of Philadelphia and South Jersey (SCI). It was the 30<sup>th</sup> annual presentation of the award by SCI, which this year observes its 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The award ceremony took place at a luncheon hosted by Auletto's in Almonesson, NJ, and attended by 300 SCI partners and sponsors comprising the lifeblood of the Port Community.

A native of Camden, NJ, Sweeney was recognized in part for the crucial role he played in the construction of the Paulsboro (NJ) Marine Terminal, the first port constructed on the Delaware River in more than 50 years. The terminal welcomed its first ship in March 2017 and as part of the award Sweeney was given a Lego model of that cargo ship, crafted by Wilbert McKinley.

In presenting the award, SCI Board member Kevin Castagnola spoke of Sweeney's vision to develop the Paulsboro terminal on the grounds of an old tank farm, a vision dating to the year 2000. "Steve always found a way. He never took no for an answer. His motive was to create jobs and improve the lives of the people in the Paulsboro area and South Jersey," Castagnola said. "No one has done more to see that that the South Jersey Port gets its fair share of funding." Sweeney's efforts have dramatically improved the railway infrastructure and truck access to the terminal, Castagnola said. When completed, it is estimated that the Paulsboro Port will create 2,500 direct jobs.

"And Steve's not done," Castagnola added. "He has a vision for future port expansion along the Delaware. His ideas have a common thread to create family sustaining jobs and improve the quality of life for South Jersey residents." Castagnola is the CEO of the South Jersey Port Corporation.

In brief and sometimes tearful remarks, Sweeney paid brief tribute to his father, Robert, who had died only the day before, and who instilled values in Sweeney. "He talked about making things better than when you found them," Sweeney said. "He taught me that you have to look out for the little guy." At one point Sweeney said simply, "I love the Port."

Helene Pierson, SCI's executive director, welcomed the many port dignitaries and sponsors including Lt. Col. Kristen Dahle, who directs the Philadelphia District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Scott Anderson, captain of the Port of Philadelphia; Monsignor Michael Doyle, former Port Chaplain, and last year's Spirit of the Port recipient Eugene Mattioni, Esq.



*L-R: Captain David Cuff, Board President, SCI; Captain Scott Anderson USCG Captain of the Port; Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney; Kevin Castagnola, CEO South Jersey Port Corporation and SCI Board Member.*



Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney and  
SCI Executive Director Helene Pierson.

She traced the 175-year history of SCI from the time of its 1840 floating church to the current day when the ministry goes to seafarers in port, helping them to communicate with their families through the use of WIFI and sim cards and, when possible, transporting them to shopping and occasionally to tourist attractions. SCI serves 30 terminals on both sides of the Delaware River, from Fairless to Marcus Hook on the Pennsylvania side and from Burlington to Paulsboro on the New Jersey side. The service reaches out to as many ships as it can each year, she said. By recent count the port welcomes 1,700 ships and 35,000 seafarers annually. Paying tribute to SCI's staff and volunteers Pierson said, "We are small but mighty."

In his invocation, SCI Volunteer Chaplain David Reid included a petition for the health and safety for some 1.5 million merchant mariners at sea "at this very moment."

The Presentation of the Colors and Pledge of Allegiance were led by the U.S. Coast Guard Color Guard. Shauna Dever offered a stirring rendition of the National Anthem. Captain David Cuff, SCI Board President, introduced the head table, which included Sweeney, Castagnola, Anderson, Pierson and Reid.

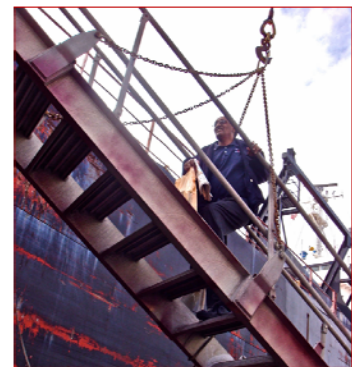
Sweeney has served in the NJ State Senate since 2002. He serves currently as General Vice President of the International Association of Bridge, Structural Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers Union. He and his wife, Patti, have two children, Stephen and Lauren. The Spirit of the Port Award is given annually to an individual, selected by leaders in the maritime community, who epitomizes the spirit and humanity of the Ports of Philadelphia and South Jersey.

### Thank You to Mesfin Ghebrewoldi

This Spring, after almost 40 decades of years of service to seafarers, SCI Senior Ship Visitor, Mesfin Ghebrewoldi retires. Mesfin has been a part of SCI for 39 years, and has led us all with his example of commitment to mission and work ethic.



Please join us on April 30th for light refreshments as we thank Mesfin for his years of service and dedication to the mission of SCI, and wish him well in his retirement. We will have a celebration for Mesfin on April 30th from 4-7pm at the SCI offices at 475 N. 5th Street, Philadelphia PA 19123. For more information or to RSVP, call 215-940-9900.



## **SCI Conducts First 'In-Depth' Training of Volunteers**

*'You may never know how much of a difference you make with your ministry of presence,' Chaplain David Reid told the group*

Seamen's Church Institute of Philadelphia and South Jersey (SCI), a venerable visitation ministry to seafarers that was launched in 1843, began its first in-depth training initiative for volunteers Feb. 15. Chaplain David Reid, a former seafarer who opened and managed the terminal at Fairless Hills in 1991, and Certified Shipboard Visitor Annie Thomas led the training, which featured remarks from Helene Pierson, SCI's executive director.

The six initial trainees hail from remarkably diverse backgrounds. Greg Adams is a retired U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Captain who directed the USCG in the Port of Philadelphia for four years at the time of 9/11. John Gardner is an Episcopal co-rector with his wife serving a congregation in Philadelphia's Rittenhouse Square. Al Griffiths has managed two terminals along the Delaware River in the Port of Philadelphia. John Jacobs has a background as a recording engineer in the world of music. John Jones drove a SEPTA bus on the streets of Philadelphia for 20 years. And photojournalist Mark Staples has traveled on assignment to 30 states and 16 countries and written news and features for two national church denominations.



The training session will be conducted for a new roster of volunteers every three months. Trainees receive an elaborate and colorful 54-page loose-leaf resource developed by SCI that is a guide for the training. In addition, trainees participate in an on-line course with an international flavor found at [shipwelfarevisitor.com](http://shipwelfarevisitor.com). That course features seven segments. Participants in both trainings follow up with practice visits (six) in the company of personnel like Reid and Thomas. After successful completion of those visits trainees will receive certification.

"SCI is in its 175<sup>th</sup> year," the trainees were told by Pierson. It began with a loading church that floated in the Delaware River for six years until it sank. In her 19<sup>th</sup> month as executive director Pierson explained that SCI, a ministry of the Episcopal Church, has in her its first non-rector to serve as executive. "We've had no formal training until now," Pierson explained. "It's always been trial by fire." Pierson explained the ministry is gradually transitioning from having daytime host transporters (visitors) who are paid to a roster of primarily volunteers, a model followed around the globe by most seafarer centers, she said. SCI has an evening roster of paid host transporters that will remain in place, she said.

What were some of the highlights trainees learned? Trainees discovered the role of visitors is to care for merchant seafarers and monitor their welfare, sometimes serving as an advocate. Visitors provide communication tools and transport to favored shopping locales near seafarer terminals. They offer a "ministry of presence" to seafarers far from home, often for long periods of time.

They also learned something of maritime ministry's history. Reid described his early life (age 19) as a British merchant mariner. In those days he could sometimes feel despondent in his work while working 84-hour weeks. One day in port a shipboard visitor made a life-changing knock on his door. "It made such a difference that someone was there who cared and wanted to listen to me," he told the trainees. "You may never know how much of a difference you make by listening to a crewmember aboard ship and through your ministry of presence in their lives. Most seafarers are delighted to hear a kind word from a stranger who cares."

The trainees found out that 1.5 million seafarers serve around the globe and a high concentration of them live in Asian nations. Seafarers have a wide variety of religious faiths "or no faith at all," Reid told them. The Maritime Labour Convention of 2006 serves as a "Bill of Rights" providing a standard of protections for merchant mariners.

The trainees learned about the different types of cargo ships. They discovered the nature of 30 terminals in the Port and the kinds of commodities they deal with and how to gain access to each terminal through the right security protocol. They learned how to prepare for ship visits, what to do on board a ship and what to report and how to make reports afterward. They were taught about the wide variety of commodities that come into the port – ranging from asphalt to rock salt to treat highways in winter to a wide variety of fruits like pineapples and bananas. They found out that 90 percent of the commodities consumers enjoy come to U.S. households via water including Kia automobiles from South Korea and gypsum used to make sheetrock for walls in the homes that people buy. They were told that the Port of Philadelphia is the second largest petrochemical port in the nation with some 63 million gallons of crude oil manufactured on the port's territory each day. Eighty percent of Chile's fruit exports come to the Port of Philadelphia with the port being the largest importer of Chilean grapes.

SCI's ministry territory can be a challenge to navigate depending on traffic conditions along Route 95. It is 55 highway miles from the northernmost Pennsylvania side terminal (Fairless) to the southernmost terminal on the Pennsylvania side (Marcus Hook). On the New Jersey side of the port the northernmost terminal is in Burlington, with the southernmost terminal visited in Paulsboro.

Finally, they concluded that most people they know have little or no idea what goes on in the port and the magnitude of the difference that seafarers make in their daily lives. The trainees agreed they need to do a better job of telling that story.

**Mark Your Calendar!**

**SCI's 8th Golf Classic**

**May 7th, 2018**

**Pennsauken County Club, Pennsauken NJ**

For more information, call 215-940-9900 x104

email [cpolit@sciphiladelphia.org](mailto:cpolit@sciphiladelphia.org)

or visit <http://www.sciphiladelphia.org/golf-classic-2018/>



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Registration and Lunch beginning at 11:00 am  
Golf Shotgun Start at Noon  
One Hour Open Bar Reception beginning at 5:30pm  
Dinner and Awards Ceremony to follow

MONDAY  
**may 7<sup>th</sup>**  
2018