



The Anchor

Seamen's Church
Institute
of Philadelphia and South Jersey

Fall 2020

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

From the Executive Director

Helene Pierson, Executive Director

J-O-Y, a small word with big meaning

It's come to this. I've stopped asking seafarers how they are doing, how they are dealing with their extended stays on board, months beyond the length they thought they'd be away from their families. They are happy to see us, happy for the special treats we bring at this time, happy for WiFi to help their communication with home, and happy that we offer personal shopping. But after some time, I came to realize that checking in on them in a way that is usually the core of our ministry -- how are you doing? -- was not doing anybody any good. And we, the staff and volunteers, and I am sure you too, understand. Because the answer is that most of us can put on a happy face, and keep going, because there is not a whole lot we can do about our woes. Here is Mark Brosas, my regular contact who coordinated all the personal shopping for his shipmates on the San Alberto which came to Gloucester to deliver our fruit every two weeks during the pandemic. It was this face of Mark's that made me understand. It is also Mark and his crew, usually very happy for shopping delivery day, that first made me realize that we need to focus on the bits of joy we can find during this time, despite our circumstances, seafarers in so much more of a difficult situation than we.



Also shown is the crew of the Hellas Poseidon. We have received similar pictures from other crews. They find joy in our caring enough to do personal shopping for them, and indeed in the stuff itself, tapping into their passions to help them get through their extended stays on board, whether it be forming a group of gamers, cooking, or playing guitar.



As we begin to enter a challenging holiday season, one where our wise elected leaders and reputable scientists are telling us not to gather with our own families, please continue to remember the seafarer who is essential to making sure your restricted life is still a very comfortable one.

I will end on a couple notes of J-O-Y. Mark got home to his family in the Philippines, along with many of his mates. And a special shoutout to the crew of the Hellas Poseidon who answered a distress call of a sailboat manned by a single sailor off the Coast of Cape May and saved a life.

May you all have a wonderful and joyous holiday season. Find joy in the little things.

Sincerely,

Helene Pierson
Executive Director



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. For gifts of stock, contact Cindy Ryan at 215-940-9900 or cryan@sciphiladelphia.org

The Pandemic continues to dominate all we do!

Hundreds of thousands of seafarers are essentially stranded on board their ships, unable to return home at the end of their contracts due to travel restrictions and quarantine requirements when crossing international borders.

In addition, most shipping companies and ship captains require their crews to remain on board while in port to protect against the possible catastrophe of a ship



becoming a hot spot for COVID-19.

Normally we enjoy taking seafarers shopping. It's more than a chance for them to stock up on snacks, toiletries, electronics, and gifts to take home – it offers a change of scenery and time spent with a friendly and welcoming host.

Since that's only rarely possible now, we have adjusted by acting as personal shoppers. Seafarers can call us or send their shopping lists electronically, and we do our best to complete the task before the ship has to leave. Our ship visitors often bring treats like pretzels or cookies (many baked and contributed by churches and individuals who are friends of SCI) to brighten the days of crew

members confined to their vessels.

Rays of Hope— Transport & Crew Changes

Although they are very few and far between, we have recently seen some signs of progress.

Thanks to the efforts of some shipping companies and governmental entities, a few crew changes have taken place. We have happily said goodbye to several groups of seafarers who had been working long past the date when they were scheduled to go home. Without question the logistics of international travel are challenging, especially when the arrival of incoming crew members must be synchronized with seafarers departing the U.S. But we believe strongly that the welfare of seafarers must be given a higher priority than it has been, and we are working with others in the maritime industry to raise awareness of this issue.



In the past few weeks we have also had a chance to transport a few seafarers to shopping or other destinations. The opportunity to go ashore even briefly is therapeutic for them, and we're delighted to welcome them into our vans again. Our ability to do this depends on the cooperation and compassion of ship captains, terminal operators, and others, and we hope to see more of this as time goes by.

We cannot leave this subject without a heartfelt salute to the courage and determination of seafarers themselves. Despite being exhausted, stressed, and desperate with concern for their families back home, they continue to work all day, every day, bringing us goods and produce from all over the world. They deserve no less than the best we can do for them.

Ditty Bag Season is here!

Our Ditty Bag program takes on special importance during the pandemic. Despite the challenges we are determined that some 2,000 seafarers who come into our ports during the holiday season will each receive a ditty bag containing 7 to 10 practical and much appreciated gifts. We are grateful to individuals, businesses, and churches who are helping collect items for ditty bags, and there is still time to help with items from our wish list or a cash contribution that enables us to buy them.



- Ditty Bag Wish List.....**
- Hats and scarves in dark colors
 - Work socks, work gloves
 - Chap Stick
 - Nail clippers
 - Razors
 - Shaving cream
 - Playing cards
 - Shampoo
 - Hand lotion
 - Toothbrush, toothpaste
 - Deodorant
 - Comb
 - Pens and writing paper
 - Mini sewing kit
 - Hard/boxed candy, gum, cough drops

SCI Events hope to be back in 2021!

Sadly, one more fallout from COVID is that we have had to cancel two of our favorite events, our annual Golf Classic, and the Philly Ship Run. Not only are these highlights of our year and great opportunities for fun and fellowship, they are also important fundraisers for SCI. We deeply appreciate donors who have stepped up to fill the financial gaps created by these cancellations, and we look forward with enthusiasm and hope to the day we can be together again on the links or in the historic Philadelphia Navy Yard.



Please consider a donation today!
Thank you for your continued support to our seafarers and SCI!!

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Happy Holidays!!

As we approach the holiday season, we look forward with cautious optimism to news about a possible vaccine for the coronavirus and other positive developments. It's possible the burden on seafarers will begin to ease, and we pray for that.

To all of you, we send our very best wishes and hopes for the year ahead, and on behalf of seafarers everywhere, we thank you for your empathy and support!



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