



# Seafarers International House

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Rev. Marsh Luther Drege  
Executive Director

We stand with seafarers. We stand with immigrants. Since 1873! Always Have, Always Will.

Our mission began as an outreach to Swedish seafarers and Swedish immigrants. Over the years, the mission evolved, based on the needs of the time. After the great wave of immigration from 1870 to 1920, the emphasis focused on seafarers for whom we provided safe, affordable lodging and a ministry of presence in the ports.

In the last ten years, the number of vulnerable immigrants coming to our shores and their harsh treatment by Government officials caused Seafarers International House to enlarge the use of its Guesthouse as a mission resource.

Today, we are proud of this dual mission for seafarers and vulnerable immigrants.

Our port mission for seafarers consist of seven port chaplains serving in ports in Baltimore, Philadelphia, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut and Rhode Island. The number of ships coming into these ports has decreased slightly in response to international trade levels and shipping routes. Moreover, new ships are designed for smaller crew sizes. Accordingly, the number of seafarers coming into our ports and staying at our Guesthouse has decreased over the last few years.

Our immigrant mission focuses primarily on asylum seekers, people who are forced to flee their homelands. There is considerable turmoil in the world, and today one out of every seven persons are displaced from their homelands due to war, insurrection, oppression, collapsed

## Mission Highlights

	2016	2015	2014
<b>Seafarers</b>			
Ships Visited	1,686	1,852	2,086
Seafarers Visited	18,970	21,500	22,738
Van Trips	3,145	4,074	5,202
Seafarers Transported	7,661	11,478	13,813
Christmas-at-Sea Gifts	1,771	2,226	2,100
<b>Immigrants</b>			
Refugees - Asylum Seekers	23	12	18
Lodging Nights	805	709	512
<b>Community</b>			
Domestic Violence–Human Trafficking	8	14	4
Local Disaster Victims	72	56	62
Youth Service Gatherings	5	4	7
Church Gatherings	181	179	163
Community Gatherings	398	447	397

economies and natural disasters. Moreover, the United States has become increasingly fearful of the arrival of these folks arriving at our borders and our airports, seeking asylum. We risk becoming a xenophobic nation with only a core of citizens and institutions practicing philoxenia– welcoming the stanger.

This mission of welcome consists of visiting asylum seekers in the prisons and detention centers where they are held upwards of six months and more while they wait for the Immigration Court to hear and adjudicate their claims for asylum. After they are released, we are able to offer them temporary lodging in our Guesthouse. Last year, we visited 80 detained asylum seekers and provided needed lodging for 23 released ‘asylees’ over a period of 805 nights.

I get to know nearly all the asylees who come and stay with us for 3-9 weeks. In

every single case I see the resilience, the agency, and the sheer determination of each person released from detention. They find jobs and apartments. They support themselves and become productive members of society. Without exception, they “pay their own way”, contrary to the stereotype that migrants are parasites on our country. And so it often comes to pass: time and time again, I visit detainees in the detention center one month and find that they are released to our care a month or two later.

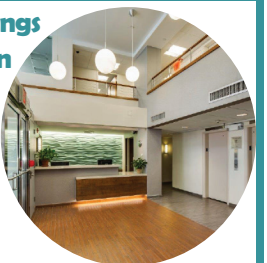
We stand with immigrants and seafarers in whatever number and with whatever need they are presented to us. Always Have. Always Will.

Blessings,

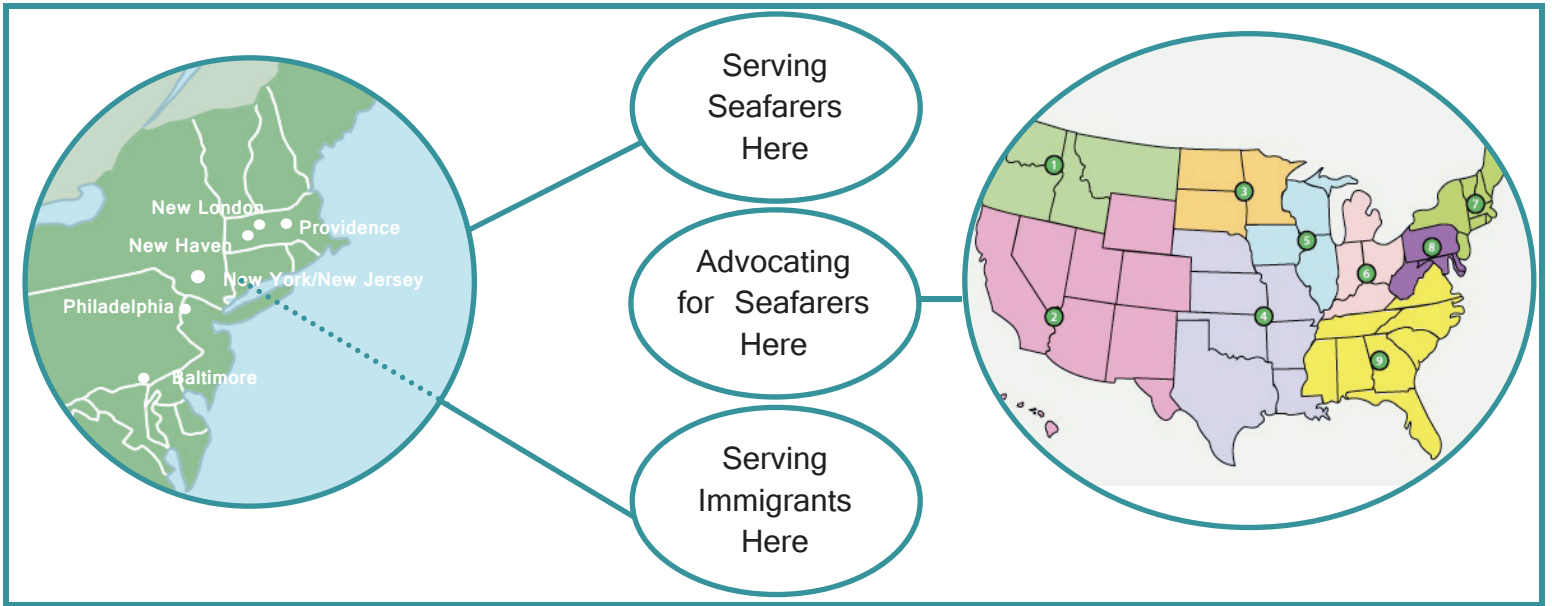
*Marsh Luther Drege*

**Remember, our Guesthouse also accommodates church gatherings and civic groups traveling to New York City in connection with their missions and needing safe, affordable lodging. Through these accommodations, we support your missions. And by staying here, you help to support our mission to seafarers, immigrants and other displaced persons.**

*Sleep Well, While Doing Good*



YEAR IN REVIEW



## Entertaining Angels Unawares

Hebrews 13:2

Let's be candid. Today, a good portion of the American public is deeply concerned about entertaining any stranger and likely is reluctant to take a chance of receiving an angel for fear of getting instead a diluter of our American culture or even a terrorist.

Indeed, in some government circles nowadays, it is suggested that we should not receive any foreigners unless they practice Christianity, speak English, are affluent and look a little like white caucasians.

Since most of the seafarers and immigrants we encounter and serve have few, if any, of those traits, we feel the need to speak

up: we stand with refugees and immigrants.

We're not alone here.

Martin Luther taught that the church is called to be present in both kingdoms — law and gospel, and that its members are called to be good citizens by their conscientious participation in the political process.

ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton has reminded us that "many of our ancestors faced the pain of having to flee their homes and the joy of being welcomed in new communities . . . [W]e honor our shared biblical values as well as the best of our nation's traditions

by offering refuge to those most in need."

Emma Lazarus has given this country an immigrant mission statement —

*Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe  
free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming  
shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed,  
to me:*

*I lift my lamp beside the golden door*

Seafarers International House is speaking up: We serve a multi-national, multi-faith community of seafarers and immigrants. Thanks be to God that we might so serve!



*Seafarers International House is a Lutheran response to the urgent needs of vulnerable seafarers and sojourners*