THE SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE

THE LOOKOUT

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6 **Shore Leave**
More Than Just Time Away From the Ship

16 **SCI Welcomes the Rev. Charles Uhlik to Ministry on the River**

19 **Eckstein Charitable Trust Awards $500,000 Grant to SCI**

24 **CME Named a MARAD Center of Excellence**

34 **At the Helm: John Hadjipateras of Dorian, LPG**

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We extend our gratitude to the Rev. David Rider for providing his photographs, featured in this magazine and other SCI publications. More of David's photos can be found here: **davidrider.photoshelter.com**

IN THIS ISSUE

4 From the President's Desk

6 Shore Leave: More Than Just Time Away From the Ship

10 SCI's International Seafarers' Center: A Hub for the Port Community

12 Advancing Seafarer Welfare: SCI Leadership at the 2026 NAMMA Annual Conference

14 From Water Street to the Waterways: SCI's Response to 9/11

16 SCI Welcomes the Rev. Charles Uhlik to Ministry on the River

18 Redefining When to Call a Chaplain

19 Eckstein Charitable Trust Awards $500,000 Grant to Strengthen SCI's Ministry on the River

20 Relationships at the Heart of Seafarers' Ministry

23 Bringing Greetings to the Seamen's Mission of Estonia in Muuga

24 SCI's Center for Maritime Education Named a MARAD Center of Excellence

26 From Assessment to Action: Advancing Inland Mariner Wellness

28 SCI, Seafarers, and Soccer Through the Years

30 Honoring Leadership and Supporting Seafarers at SCI's 2026 Silver Bell Awards

33 Your Most Meaningful Gift Might Already Be in Your Portfolio

34 At The Helm: John Hadjipateras

BACK Christmas at Sea: A Lifeline of Warmth and Connection



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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

The Rev. Mark Nestlehutt
President & Executive Director,
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Recently, I heard a university president reflect on the mood of our country and the challenges facing college seniors preparing to enter the workforce. The picture he painted was daunting, to say the least: in a world beset by uncertainty, it is often difficult to focus on the good.

Yet, later this month, millions of Americans will gather with family and friends to celebrate Thanksgiving. We will share familiar meals, enjoy cherished traditions, perhaps take a walk, play touch football, or watch an NFL game—I'm pulling for the Eagles. Whatever our customs, I hope we will pause to give thanks for the blessings in our lives and for those whose contributions we too often take for granted.

I am especially mindful of the thousands of U.S. mariners who will spend Thanksgiving aboard vessels navigating our rivers, Great Lakes, and coastal waterways, far from their families and the comforts of home. Their work makes possible so much of what we enjoy in our daily lives, and they deserve our gratitude.

Shipping, of course, is a global industry. Beyond the approximately 85,000 mariners serving aboard U.S.-flagged vessels, some 2.5 million international seafarers crew the world's merchant fleet. Many navigate dangerous waters, including the Persian Gulf, Red Sea, and Black Sea, facing threats of missile and drone attacks and piracy. With approximately 80% of global trade by volume moving by sea, their service touches nearly every aspect of our lives.

At the Seamen's Church Institute, we remain committed to supporting these men and women through pastoral care, crisis response, education, training, and advocacy.

We can do this work because of you—our friends, donors, volunteers, and partners—whose compassion and generosity sustain our mission. Your support is more than a financial contribution; it is an expression of care for mariners and their families, most of whom you may never meet.

This issue of *The Lookout* offers a glimpse into the many ways your generosity makes a difference. We highlight our advocacy for shore leave, our hospitality to visiting seafarers, and partnerships that strengthen mariner care worldwide. We revisit SCI's response to 9/11, welcome the Rev. Charles Uhlik to our expanding ministry in St. Louis, and celebrate our Center for Maritime Education's designation as a MARAD Center of Excellence. We also acknowledge a transformative gift strengthening our Ministry on the River program, celebrate our Silver Bell Awards Dinner honorees, and share reflections from John Hadjipateras of Dorian LPG in our At The Helm column.

As we enter this season of giving thanks, please know how deeply grateful I am for your trust, friendship, and steadfast commitment to SCI. You make our ministry possible, and through your generosity, mariners know they are not forgotten.

I wish you and your loved ones a blessed Thanksgiving and a joyful holiday season.

Faithfully,



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Seafarers and mariners keep the world moving, delivering the goods we depend on every day. At the Seamen's Church Institute, we support the people behind that essential work and your generosity makes this possible. Help us make an impact by donating at seamenschurch.org/giving or scan the QR code to give online. For corporate sponsorship opportunities, please contact Amy Mugavero at amugavero@seamenschurch.org

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26TH ANNUAL RIVER BELL AWARDS LUNCHEON

Thursday, December 10, 2026

Paducah-McCracken County Convention & Expo Center
415 Park Street | Paducah, KY 42001
11:00 a.m.: Check-In & Reception
12:00 p.m.: Luncheon & Awards

For questions about the event or to register via email, please email **riverbell@seamenschurch.org**

CENTER FOR MARINER ADVOCACY
SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE

SHORE LEAVE:
MORE THAN JUST TIME AWAY FROM THE SHIP

By Philip C. Schifflin, Jr., Esq.
Director, Center for Mariner Advocacy

For most of us, leaving work at the end of the day is something we take for granted. We walk out the door to return to our families, homes, and communities. For a mariner, however, their workplace is also their home.

A seafarer often spends months aboard a vessel, living and working with the same people in a confined environment. Even when a watch ends, the mariner cannot truly leave work behind. The machinery, noise, responsibilities, and routines remain just outside the cabin door.

That is why shore leave matters—and has mattered for as long as mariners have gone to sea.

A Tradition As Old As Seafaring

For centuries, mariners embarked on voyages that kept them away from home for months or even years. Life aboard sailing vessels was physically and emotionally demanding. Accommodations were cramped, food and fresh water could be limited, medical care was rudimentary, and communication with loved ones effectively ended when the vessel disappeared over the horizon.

Arrival in port represented far more than another stop on a voyage. It offered an opportunity to step away from the hardships and discipline of shipboard life and reconnect, however briefly, with the world ashore.

Mariners went ashore to obtain necessities, seek medical care, send and receive correspondence, attend religious services, conduct personal business, and find recreation and companionship. For crews confined aboard for months, simply walking through a port and interacting with people outside the crew offered relief from the isolation and routine of life at sea.

This relationship with ports is still visible in the world's great maritime cities. Entire waterfront neighborhoods developed around visiting mariners. Sailors' homes, missions, churches, boarding houses, shops, and hospitals emerged to serve those arriving from the sea.

Ships have changed dramatically. Sail gave way to steam, steam to diesel, and today's vessels bear little resemblance to the ships on which earlier generations sailed. Voyages have become faster, crews smaller, ports more secure, and communication nearly instantaneous.

Yet one fundamental characteristic of seafaring has not changed: the mariner still lives where the mariner works.

Continued on p. 8

This reality explains why shore leave has retained its importance across generations. The need to step away from the ship is not a recent development created by modern discussions of mental health or mariner wellness. Those discussions have given us a better vocabulary for understanding its importance, but mariners have understood the value of going ashore for centuries.



Philip C. Schifflin, Jr., Esq.
Director, Center for Mariner Advocacy



An Issue of Health, Well-Being, and Safety

Life at sea places unique demands on mariners. Long and irregular working hours, fatigue, isolation, limited privacy, separation from family, and the pressures of operating a vessel safely can take a cumulative toll.

Technology has made communication with loved ones easier, and improvements in onboard connectivity are unquestionably valuable. But a video call home is not the same as leaving the vessel. Shore leave provides something technology cannot: physical separation from the workplace and a temporary return to life ashore.

That separation is critical to seafarer health and well-being and arguably vital to maritime safety.

Mariners navigate vessels, maintain complex machinery, handle cargo, stand watches, respond to emergencies, and perform other tasks upon which the safety of the vessel, crew, cargo, and marine environment depends.



Phil Schifflin, Esq. talks with a seafarer in the Port of New Orleans.

Shore leave alone cannot solve fatigue or substitute for appropriate manning, adequate rest, safe working conditions, or reasonable work schedules. But it provides an important opportunity to decompress, recover, and temporarily separate from the shipboard environment.

An industry that depends upon healthy, alert, and experienced mariners has an interest in providing reasonable opportunities to leave the vessel when operational circumstances permit.

International Law Recognizes the Importance of Shore Leave

International maritime law has long recognized the connection between shore leave and mariner welfare. Regulation 2.4 of the International Labour Organization's Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006) provides that seafarers are to be granted shore leave for the benefit of their health and well-being, consistent with the operational requirements of their positions.

Shore leave is not characterized merely as recreation or a perk of employment. The Convention expressly connects it to seafarer health and well-being.

Similarly, the International Maritime Organization's Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic (FAL Convention) includes international standards concerning crew members' ability to go ashore while their vessels are in port.

Both instruments reflect a basic principle: a seafarer should not become effectively confined aboard their vessel.

Remaining Barriers

Unfortunately, recognizing a right on paper does not always mean a mariner can exercise it.

Modern port calls can be extremely short. Smaller crews and operational responsibilities may make leaving the vessel difficult. Some terminals are miles from the nearest community, while port security arrangements can complicate even the trip from vessel to terminal gate.

Immigration requirements present another significant barrier.

A mariner may join a vessel in one country, sail aboard a ship registered in another, and visit numerous other countries during a single contract. When immigration or visa requirements prevent even a few hours ashore, a person can travel thousands of miles without being permitted to enter the communities through which they pass.

Legitimate public health, safety, security, and operational concerns sometimes require restrictions and must be respected. But necessary restrictions differ from those resulting from administrative convenience, inconsistent implementation, or unnecessary barriers.

New Protections Are on the Horizon

The International Christian Maritime Association (ICMA), of which SCI is a member, proposed amending the shore leave provision of MLC, 2006. Governments, shipowner representatives, and seafarer representatives subsequently adopted amendments strengthening its shore leave provisions. These new protections are scheduled to enter into force on December 23, 2027.

While these amendments are important and welcome, the question remains: will they reverse the trend of seafarers getting less and less shore leave?

Governments, shipowners, port authorities, terminal operators, immigration officials, seafarers' welfare organizations, and others throughout the maritime community have a role in balancing legitimate security and operational requirements with the human needs of people working aboard ships.

The maritime industry asks a great deal of its mariners. They spend long periods away from family, live where they work, and accept responsibilities most people ashore rarely see or consider. Their work keeps vessels moving and global commerce functioning.

When mariners arrive in port, allowing them a reasonable opportunity to walk down the gangway should not be regarded as an unnecessary inconvenience.

For most of us, leaving work at the end of the day is routine. For a seafarer who has spent months at sea, it can mean much, much more.

SCI'S INTERNATIONAL SEAFARERS' CENTER: A HUB FOR THE PORT COMMUNITY



By Naomi Walker, Ph.D.
Manager, Special Projects

Matthew Morse, Esq. joined SCI as the Director of the International Seafarers' Center in July 2024. He now also holds the role of Deputy Director of Operations for SCI. He was elected to the Board of the North American Maritime Ministry Association (NAMMA) in August 2026.

When he first started at the ISC, Matt Morse says he was impressed by the existing commitment to living out SCI's overall mission. His focus has been multifaceted: supporting SCI Chaplains and staff in their work as SCI's blue-water "boots on the ground," raising greater awareness within and strengthening SCI's relationship with a port community of tens of thousands of souls, enhancing processes and policies across the organization, and creating efficiencies throughout the SCI system. We talked to him recently to ask how his work at the ISC is going.



Matthew Morse, Esq., Director, International Seafarers' Center.

What are the opportunities presented in your roles?

I am privileged to wear several hats for SCI. As Deputy Director of Operations, I work with Director of Operations Leslie O'Neal across the organization to contain or reduce costs, enhance services, and improve processes. As Director of the ISC specifically, I manage operations and staff and work on community engagement and outreach to the wider port and the broader geographical areas around us. Our President refers to this as "friendraising," and I like that term.

The port, as a working environment, is unlike any other. It takes time and concerted effort to build community and trust, and our whole team has worked together to do this. My staff and I are proud to have broken through in both large and small ways. I'm happy to say that we have forged excellent, strong relationships with port representatives, the Port Authority, the Port Authority Police Department, shipping associations, and terminal representatives. Those relationships continue to strengthen as we earn trust over time. We are achieving this through consistently reaching out to different groups, attending events of and meetings for port constituents and the area maritime community, and making concerted efforts to nurture real, personal connections across all layers of a diverse and complex port community while emphasizing SCI's inclusive, non-proselytizing care and amenities. The ISC is also increasingly and intentionally being used for community gatherings and celebrations such as Christmas, the International Day of the Seafarer, or our recent 9/11 memorial service.

Members of our wider community have noticed all this and told us that it's great that SCI is actively reaching out to them. This in turn has increased our opportunities for collaborative work within the port; SCI feels increasingly welcome at the table. We serve seafarers most effectively when we serve the communities that daily interact with them and with us.

One of the special things about SCI in this setting is that our offerings come from a place of authentic care and selfless service. Transactional relationships are by nature common in the port, but SCI stands apart from this because we are here for people rather than looking to extract something from them.

What are some of the challenges you face?

The ISC facility itself is large, complex, and demanding. It's a challenge to consistently split focus between building outward-looking relationships, thinking holistically about organizational operational needs, and dealing with our facility's significant requirements.

More centrally to SCI's overall mission, a real challenge is meaningfully meeting the needs of international seafarers in an age when shore leave is rarer and shorter than ever before. How does SCI through the ISC serve people who don't necessarily have hours to spend in a center, but instead need to make the most of an increasingly brief chance to go ashore? We are constantly trying to be both creative and focused in our approach. And we are big believers in doing little, impactful things with great love and care.

To give one example of this: research has shown seafarers who are on vessels for long periods of time can experience nerve damage because of the vibrations of the vessel and the nature of their work. Working in concert with SCI's Development team, the ISC secured funding for and installed a state-of-the-art massage chair in the ISC for free use. Seafarers can use it while connecting with their families or talking and laughing with their shipmates as they wait for transportation to take them to the mall. They are charged nothing and receive something of quietly impactful actual value. It meets a real need and respects their demanding schedules and has therefore been very popular so far.

To your point about the operational challenges of the center itself, what is the purpose and advantage of having a physical center within the port in the 21st century?

Great question. I believe the ISC operates as both hub and beacon. It is the only open facility in the whole port, a neutral territory in what is by nature a siloed environment. Our port community can come to us for room rentals, for counseling, for recreation and fitness, and for authentic human connection. We are the place. We are both physically open to visitors, but also spiritually and emotionally open and accepting of everyone–no matter their job, faith, or background. We offer a welcome to everyone. There is great symbolic value in this, and the cultivation of a steady presence in our community makes our work more visible to, and vital to, those we interact with and serve every day.

Our physical space communicates to all that SCI is here and that it's worth paying attention to the people we serve, because they're important to everything that happens in the port environment. Seafarers are often "invisible" to the larger world. SCI is visible through the ISC and therefore that makes seafarers more visible.

How do you see SCI's mission in action in the ISC: in your staff, in the chaplaincy side, and in operations?

To answer this, I thought the best thing would be to highlight the people on our ISC staff who are embodying SCI's mission on a daily basis. I see SCI's mission in how Chaplain Michelle McWilliams holds each seafarer with care in her heart, offers her experience at the center to help other staff members without question or hesitation, and spends free time assisting Christmas at Sea ("CaS") Director Joanne Bartosik. I see it in Joanne's tireless dedication to CaS and to the countless volunteers who send in their handmade items. I see it in how Father Bill Allport brings intentionality and care to each encounter between leaving the ISC and on the vessels themselves



and in the ideas he generates. I see it in Father James Kollin's heart for interfaith dialogue, his grounded presence with seafarers, and his efforts to be inclusive toward the communities we serve. I see it in the warmth of welcome that our daytime Admin, Janet Temchus, gives to every individual who walks through our doors. I see it in the pragmatic attention to detail and the care that evening Admin Aileen Crisonino brings to her role. I see it in the willingness of Operations Associate Denise Davis to engage meaningfully with those she transports. I see it in the enthusiasm of new Operations Associate Anwar Afifi, and I see it in the dedication and good-humored energy that Facilities Associate William Mercer brings with him every day.



The Rev. Mark Nestlehutt presenting on the NAMMA-ICMA partnership.

ADVANCING SEAFARER WELFARE: SCI LEADERSHIP AT THE 2026 NAMMA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

SCI leaders played a prominent role at the 2026 North American Maritime Ministry Association (NAMMA) Annual Conference, held August 4–6 in Philadelphia. Through presentations, panel discussions, and organizational leadership, SCI contributed its experience and perspective to conversations about collaboration, advocacy, professional development, and the future of maritime ministry.



SCI President & Executive Director the Rev. Mark Nestlehutt, who also serves as Chair of the International Christian Maritime Association (ICMA), spoke about the close relationship between NAMMA and ICMA and the value of greater collaboration among maritime ministries and seafarer welfare organizations. He emphasized that gatherings such as the NAMMA Conference give chaplains and ship visitors opportunities to learn from one another, strengthen relationships, and work collectively to better serve mariners around the world.

Phil Schifflin, Esq., Director of SCI's Center for Mariner Advocacy, joined Dr. Peter Rouch, Secretary General of the Mission to Seafarers, and Simon Grainge, CEO of the International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN), for the panel "Advocacy for Seafarers: Partnerships, Experience, and Increased Impact." Their discussion explored how shared expertise, strategic partnerships, and collective advocacy can amplify seafarers' voices and strengthen the international maritime welfare community.

Matthew Morse, Esq., SCI's International Seafarers' Center Director, was elected to the NAMMA Board of Trustees while at the Annual Conference.

The conference also highlighted SCI's work to advance maritime chaplaincy through research and training. The Rev. David Fleenor, Ph.D., presented "Essential Competencies for Maritime Chaplaincy: Lessons Learned from Study Prepared for the Seamen's Church Institute." Supported by a grant from The Episcopal Church's United Thank Offering, Dr. Fleenor's research examines the essential competencies and practices that enable maritime chaplains to serve mariners and seafarers effectively. Its findings helped shape *At the Water's Edge*, SCI's new structured training resource designed to strengthen pastoral proficiency, support professional practice, and prepare chaplains for the complex realities of maritime ministry. Dr. Fleenor's NAMMA presentation is available to watch online, and *At the Water's Edge* is available free of charge through SCI's website.

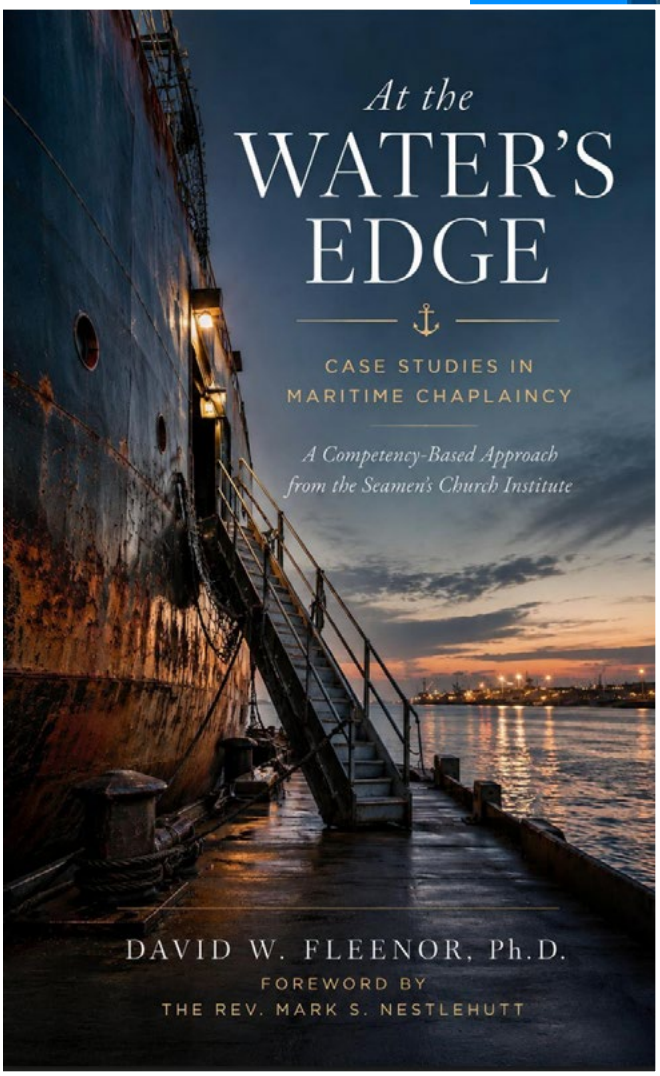


The Rev. Dr. David Fleenor presents on his new publication "At the Water's Edge."

SCI's engagement with NAMMA will continue through Matthew Morse, Esq., Director of SCI's International Seafarers' Center, who was elected to the organization's Board during the conference. Matt will serve a three-year term alongside maritime ministry leaders from across North America. Reflecting on his appointment, he emphasized the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues across the maritime ministry community, respond thoughtfully to the evolving needs of seafarers, and strengthen the collective impact of their work.



Phil Schifflin, Esq. presenting at the NAMMA conference.



Together, these contributions reflect SCI's continued leadership within the maritime ministry community and its commitment to advancing seafarer welfare through collaboration, advocacy, research, training, and compassionate service. We congratulate Matt on his election and look forward to the experience, leadership, and spirit of partnership he will bring to NAMMA over the next three years.





FROM WATER STREET TO THE WATERWAYS: SCI'S RESPONSE TO 9/11

By Bridgit Patterson
Communications Coordinator

On September 11, 2001, New York Harbor became both a witness to unfathomable tragedy and a pathway to safety. As smoke darkened the sky above Lower Manhattan and ash filled the streets, people crowded the waterfront seeking a way off the island. Mariners met their need. More than 150 ferries, tugboats, tour boats, pilot boats, personal watercraft, and other vessels joined the response. In what became the largest water evacuation in history, they carried an estimated 500,000 people away from danger while bringing first responders and essential supplies toward a city in crisis.

Twenty-five years later, we remember first those who were killed in the attacks and those who died in the years that followed from their lasting health effects. We remember the families and communities forever changed. We also honor the people who moved toward danger to help others, including the mariners who took to the water, many without waiting to be asked.

At SCI, the response began just blocks from the World Trade Center. SCI staff and a class of maritime education students who had traveled from the Mississippi River System and Gulf Coast watched the attacks unfold from the Institute's headquarters at 241 Water Street, approximately 850 yards away. As people fled Lower Manhattan under the threat of the towers' collapse, staff gathered in the headquarters' chapel. They voted on whether to stay and establish a relief station for rescue workers. The decision was unanimous.

Within hours, staff were wading through ankle-deep ash to distribute flyers directing workers to SCI. The building soon became a government-recognized Emergency Relief Station. Its doors remained open around the clock for twelve straight days, supported by staff, trustees, friends, family members, and other volunteers. Some slept in



makeshift rest areas inside the maritime training rooms so they could return to the work at hand.

As SCI's 2001 Annual Report observed, "By the weekend, SCI, as a maritime non-profit, was hardly recognizable." Supplies arrived from collection sites, including the Javits Center and Shea Stadium, filling a spare warehouse next door and spilling into the street where responders could reach them. The lobby became a makeshift pharmacy with over-the-counter medication and first aid supplies. One maritime education classroom housed podiatrists and chiropractors who tended to the aching bodies of first responders and utility workers. Other classrooms became places to sleep between shifts.





The relief station served hundreds of firefighters, police officers, National Guard troops, utility crews, communications workers, and others. At the City Council's request, SCI also sheltered three families evacuated from a nearby building. Workers found hot meals and practical help, but they also found room to pause. SCI Chaplains and volunteers listened, prayed with those who wished to pray, and offered grief counseling throughout the day and night.

Many arrived covered in dust and grime, carrying memories of what they had seen and news of colleagues they had lost. Some sat down for the first time after hours of work. Care at SCI meant recognizing the person behind the uniform and making space for exhaustion and grief alongside the urgent needs of the response. As the Rev. Canon Peter Larom, SCI's then-Executive Director, later recalled, "Each one was greeted at our doors as a hero."

While the Water Street relief station became a center of SCI's response, the effects of the attacks reached the mariners SCI served elsewhere. Staff at the International Seafarers' Center in Port Newark expanded visits to vessels in the port. Seafarers faced sudden restrictions on shore leave and limited contact with families thousands of miles away, often while trying to understand what had happened in a country far from home. An SCI Chaplain's visit offered a human connection amid uncertainty.

On the inland waterways, SCI's Ministry on the River Chaplains and Chaplain Associates sought ways to reach mariners confronting lock closures, boarding restrictions, and other disruptions as transportation and security practices changed. Their work, like the visits in Port Newark, underscored the need to preserve access to pastoral care during a crisis, even as security measures tightened.

Across the harbor and beyond, the response was made up of countless acts of service. Mariners ferried people to safety and carried help toward shore. First responders entered places others were fleeing. Volunteers sorted supplies, prepared food, made beds, listened, and stayed beside people in grief. Each answered a need they could see.

SCI remembers its place within that collective effort with humility and enduring gratitude. We remember those who lost their lives, those who mourn them, and those who continue to live with the physical and emotional consequences of September 11…

…We give thanks for the mariners, first responders, chaplains, staff, volunteers, and neighbors who offered what they had. Their example calls us to meet people in moments of crisis with the same dignity, compassion, and care.



Bridgit Patterson
Communications Coordinator



SCI WELCOMES THE REV. CHARLES UHLIK TO MINISTRY ON THE RIVER

SCI is pleased to welcome the Rev. Charles Uhlik as its newest Ministry on the River Chaplain, based in St. Louis and serving mariners throughout the Upper Mississippi River region.

Uhlik brings to the position a varied background in ministry, military chaplaincy, private industry, and service to mariners. Most recently, he served for 11 years as rector of Grace Episcopal Church in Paducah, KY, where his connection to SCI and the inland maritime community began more than six years ago.

Former SCI Chaplain the Rev. Kempton Baldridge first introduced Uhlik to towboat crews working the inland waterways, taking him aboard vessels and introducing him to captains and mariners. The experience led Uhlik to volunteer as an SCI Chaplain Associate and ultimately helped draw him back to the chaplaincy work he had known earlier in his career.

A native of Fremont, Nebraska, Uhlik began his ministry as a Roman Catholic priest and also served as a Chaplain in the U.S. Army Reserve. His military service included an assignment with an artillery unit in Nuremberg, Germany, service during Operation Desert Storm, and clinical work at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. During his years as a Roman Catholic priest, he also served as a Canonical Associate. Later, during a period of transition in his ministry,

Uhlik worked as a supervisor with Roadway Express before entering the Episcopal Church. After completing two years of Anglican studies, he was received as an Episcopal priest in 2005. His ministry has since taken him to congregations in Missouri, Minnesota, and Kentucky.

Uhlik's placement in St. Louis also marks the culmination of SCI's **$5 million capital campaign to expand Ministry on the River**, strengthening the Institute's ability to provide pastoral care and practical support to mariners across the U.S. inland river system and Gulf Coast.

"Having Charles in St. Louis is the capstone of our effort to expand Ministry on the River," said the Rev. Mark Nestlehutt, President & Executive Director of SCI. "We are deeply grateful to our Board Chair, Mark Knoy, our Board of Trustees, our development team, and everyone who helped bring this campaign to fruition. Their commitment has allowed us to build a stronger chaplaincy presence across the inland waterways and Charles is a wonderful addition to that team. His arrival in St. Louis is a fitting culmination of the vision so many people worked together to achieve."

Based in St. Louis, Uhlik will serve mariners along the **Upper Mississippi River from St. Louis north to Minneapolis**, visiting vessels and crews and providing a consistent, confidential pastoral presence. He joins three other Ministry on the River Chaplains serving key regions of the inland waterways and Gulf Coast: the Rev. Grace Pardun, Supervisory Chaplain, based in Paducah and serving the Upper Mississippi and Ohio River regions; the Rev. Geoff Davis, serving the Lower Mississippi and Gulf Coast; and the Rev. Nancy Simpson, serving the Houston Ship Channel and Gulf Coast.

Together, the Chaplains are supported by a network of SCI Chaplain Associates located along U.S. waterways and shorelines, extending SCI's reach and providing local connections to mariners where they live and work.

Our commitment, to go where mariners are and build relationships through presence, trust, and service, has guided SCI's chaplaincy for generations. With Uhlik joining the Ministry on the River team, SCI extends that tradition and strengthens its ability to be present for those working along America's inland waterways.

"I am excited to join SCI in St. Louis, as it feels like a natural extension of my roots in chaplaincy and the work I've been called to throughout my ministry…. I'm excited for this next chapter and honored to meet mariners where they are, listen to what they're facing, and support them however I can."



The Rev. Charles Uhlik
Chaplain,
Ministry on the River

seamenschurch.org/mor

REDEFINING WHEN TO CALL A CHAPLAIN



The Rev. Grace Pardun
Supervisory Chaplain for Ministry on the River

For years, the Seamen's Church Institute's Ministry on the River (MOR) has maintained a 24/7 toll-free number for mariners and maritime companies to reach a Chaplain in times of crisis. But recent conversations with mariners, shoreside staff, HR representatives, and industry partners have raised an important question for me: What constitutes a crisis?

Often, the word "crisis" suggests that something catastrophic must happen before someone makes the call. A death. A serious accident. A life-threatening situation. Those are certainly moments when SCI Chaplains are ready to respond, but our ministry is not limited to when circumstances reach a tipping point.

As Chaplains, we spend time with mariners and the shoreside personnel who support them. These relationships help us better understand the pressures mariners experience in the workplace. We walk alongside members of the maritime industry, identifying ways of providing support within company policies and procedures.



Chaplain Grace Pardun (L), and Chaplain Charles Uhlik (center) talk with a mariner in Wycliffe, KY.

As we work to strengthen a "culture of care" across the inland maritime industry, guided in part by what we have learned through SCI's 2026 **U.S. Inland Mariner Wellness Assessment**, we are removing the stigma surrounding mental and physical health. Alongside this aim, we are creating environments where mariners feel comfortable coming forward when they need support. That also means examining the language we use. And so, it is becoming clear to our MOR Chaplains that the word "crisis" itself can become a barrier to asking for help. If a mariner believes their situation must rise to the level of a crisis before calling an SCI Chaplain, they may wait too long, if they even reach out at all. Our goal is to make chaplaincy support available well before it reaches that point.

Sometimes a mariner is struggling emotionally but would never describe the situation as an emergency. There may be trouble at home while they are hundreds of miles away. A fellow crewmember may notice that a colleague seems depressed, or is behaving differently, and become concerned. A captain, manager, or HR representative may recognize that something does not seem right but wonder whether the situation is "serious enough" to call a Chaplain.

That is why, moving forward, Ministry on the River is changing how we talk about our 24/7 toll-free number. Rather than defining it as an emergency or crisis line, we want mariners, their families, and shoreside staff to think of it simply as the Ministry on the River Chaplaincy Line—a resource available whenever something feels important, troubling, or simply worth talking about.

SCI Chaplains are here to listen, provide guidance and perspective, and help connect mariners and shoreside staff with appropriate resources 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. There is no threshold that must be reached before calling. Whether you are facing an immediate crisis, concerned about someone else, or dealing with something that is beginning to weigh on you, we are here. Call **+1 800.708.1998** or email **mor@seamenschurch.org** and ask for a Chaplain. Concern or crisis, we will be there—because what matters to our mariners also matters to us.

ECKSTEIN CHARITABLE TRUST AWARDS $500,000 GRANT TO STRENGTHEN SCI'S MINISTRY ON THE RIVER

SCI has received a $500,000 grant from the Ray & Kay Eckstein Charitable Trust to support *Ministry on the River: Renewal, Reflection & Reach*. This two-year initiative will strengthen and expand SCI's Ministry on the River (MOR) program and advance a key commitment of the organization's most recent strategic plan. The initiative will invest in SCI's Chaplaincy team and grow its network of Chaplain Associates, extending pastoral care, crisis support, and a ministry of presence to mariners across America's inland waterways. The investment will help ensure that more mariners have access to trusted support where they live and work.

"We are deeply grateful to the Ray & Kay Eckstein Charitable Trust for this transformative investment in our Ministry on the River program," said the Rev. Mark Nestlehutt, President & Executive Director of the Seamen's Church Institute. "As the industry and the needs of its workforce continue to evolve, our commitment remains the same: to meet mariners where they are and provide a trusted, confidential presence in their everyday lives and in times of need…

…This investment allows us to carry that tradition forward for U.S. inland mariners while building a stronger, more connected chaplaincy network for the future."



The Rev. Mark Nestlehutt
President & Executive Director

For nearly three decades, Ministry on the River has served inland mariners, shoreside personnel, and their families. SCI Chaplains meet mariners where they work—aboard vessels, at docks and terminals, during crew changes, and throughout the communities that support the inland maritime industry.

That ministry of presence is particularly important for a workforce whose jobs can mean long periods away from home and family. Through vessel visits, confidential conversations, crisis response, and fellowship, SCI Chaplains provide a consistent source of support as mariners navigate the personal, emotional, and spiritual challenges that can accompany life on the waterways. The Ray & Kay Eckstein Charitable Trust grant will enable SCI to invest not only in expanding the reach of that ministry, but also in the people who provide it.

Central to the initiative will be developing continuing education and professional development offerings designed specifically for maritime chaplaincy. Online training modules will help SCI Chaplains and Chaplain Associates strengthen the specialized knowledge and skills needed to support mariners and respond to the unique realities of life and work on the water. Complementing this training, reflective practice groups will give Chaplains structured opportunities to discuss their experiences with colleagues, learn from challenging situations, share effective approaches, and develop peer mentoring relationships. Together, these resources will promote greater consistency across SCI's geographically dispersed chaplaincy network while providing Chaplains with the professional and peer support needed to sustain their work over the long term.

The initiative will also strengthen onboarding and training for SCI's non-stipendiary Chaplain Associates, who extend Ministry on the River's presence throughout U.S. inland waterways and shorelines. By building relationships with mariners in communities beyond the immediate reach of SCI's full-time Chaplains, Chaplain Associates help advance SCI's long-term goal of having support available within a two-hour drive of any inland mariner in need. Enhanced preparation will equip these Chaplain Associates with the knowledge, resources, and confidence to serve effectively as part of the broader Ministry on the River network.

Through *Renewal, Reflection & Reach*, that investment will ultimately be measured in stronger Chaplains, deeper connections, and a Ministry on the River better equipped to walk alongside the mariners who keep America's waterways, and its commerce, moving.

RELATIONSHIPS AT THE HEART OF SEAFARERS' MINISTRY

By the Rev. Mark Nestlehutt
President & Executive Director,
The Seamen's Church Institute;
Chair, International Christian Maritime Association

I recently had the opportunity to join colleagues from across Northern Europe for the International Christian Maritime Association (ICMA) Northern Europe Regional Meeting, held September 23–25 in Helsinki, Finland. As the meeting drew to a close, I was asked to offer a few reflections on what we had heard and discussed over our three days together.

At ICMA gatherings, I often find myself talking about "isms"—ecumenism and proselytism among them. This time, however, I found myself returning to something much simpler: **relationships**.

For more than 190 years, relationships have been central to SCI's ministry. Whether our Chaplains are stepping aboard a ship in Port Newark, meeting an inland mariner aboard a towboat on the Mississippi, or helping someone navigate a difficult situation through our Center for Mariner Advocacy, our work begins by meeting people where they are, listening to them, and earning their trust.

The meeting in Northern Europe was a reminder that those relationships extend well beyond SCI.

From One Chaplain to a Global Network

During the meeting, we heard the story of a Norwegian chaplain who knew a seafarer well enough to recognize when that person needed support and reached out directly. It was a simple example, but an important one. The chaplain understood the person—not simply the vessel, the company, or the circumstances.

That kind of connection is fundamental to chaplaincy.



Sanna Rasi (L) and Jaakko Laasio (R) of the Finnish Seamen's Church, with ICMA Chair, Mark Nestlehutt.



Attendees at ICMA's Northern Europe Regional Meeting in the port of Helsinki.

But ships move, and the people aboard them move with them. A chaplain may meet a seafarer in one port and sense that something is not quite right. The vessel may sail the next day for another country, seemingly ending that opportunity for connection.

This is where relationships among maritime ministries become so important.

Through ICMA, SCI is part of an international network of chaplains and seafarers' welfare organizations serving ports around the world. We may not have an SCI Chaplain waiting at a vessel's next destination, but chances are good that we know someone who is there.

Without compromising confidentiality, one chaplain can reach out to another and simply say: There is someone aboard this vessel who may need a little extra attention when they arrive.

That ability to extend care beyond our own organization is one of ICMA's great strengths. **No single organization can be everywhere, but together our reach is extraordinary.**

A Global Ministry for a Global Industry

Maritime ministry has changed considerably since many of our organizations were founded.

SCI was established in 1834 to serve mariners arriving in the growing Port of New York. Today, the ships entering our ports are crewed by men and women from nations around the world. The same is true across the global maritime industry.

A seafarer might encounter one maritime ministry in Rotterdam, another in Singapore, and an SCI Chaplain when the vessel reaches Port Newark.

The name of the organization providing that care should be secondary to the needs of the person standing before us.

That principle has been at the heart of ICMA since its creation in 1969. Organizations representing different Christian traditions recognized that they could accomplish more for seafarers by working together than by working independently. More than half a century later, that idea remains both relevant and practical.

We are greater than the sum of our parts.

Dignity and Respect for Every Mariner

Another theme running through our conversations was social justice.

Seafarers work within a global industry, but their experiences can differ significantly depending on nationality, employment arrangements, vessel type, flag state, and other circumstances. Some have access to strong support systems. Others can find themselves far from home, isolated, or unsure where to turn when problems arise.

For SCI, this speaks directly to a principle that has guided our ministry for generations.

We care for mariners because we recognize the humanity—and, from our faith perspective, a glimpse of the divine—in every person who comes before us. We see them. We listen

Continued on p. 22

to them. And we treat them as individuals rather than simply members of a workforce.

It does not matter what nationality they are or what flag they sail under. When mariners come into our ports or encounter our Chaplains along the inland waterways, each deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.

That is as true in Newark, Paducah, St. Louis, New Orleans, and Houston as it is in ports throughout Northern Europe and around the world.

Relationships Make the Network Work

Regional gatherings such as this one also remind me that the relationships supporting this work are often built outside formal meetings.

They happen over meals, in conversations between sessions, sitting around a table at the end of the day—or, in Northern Europe, even talking in a sauna over a beer.

These moments may seem incidental, but they build familiarity and trust. We get to know the people doing similar work thousands of miles away. We learn about their challenges and resources, and they learn about ours.

Then, someday, a vessel leaves one of our ports carrying a seafarer who needs help.

And we know whom to call.

For SCI, participating in ICMA is therefore about much more than attending international conferences. It connects our Chaplains, advocates, and the mariners we serve to a much larger community of care.

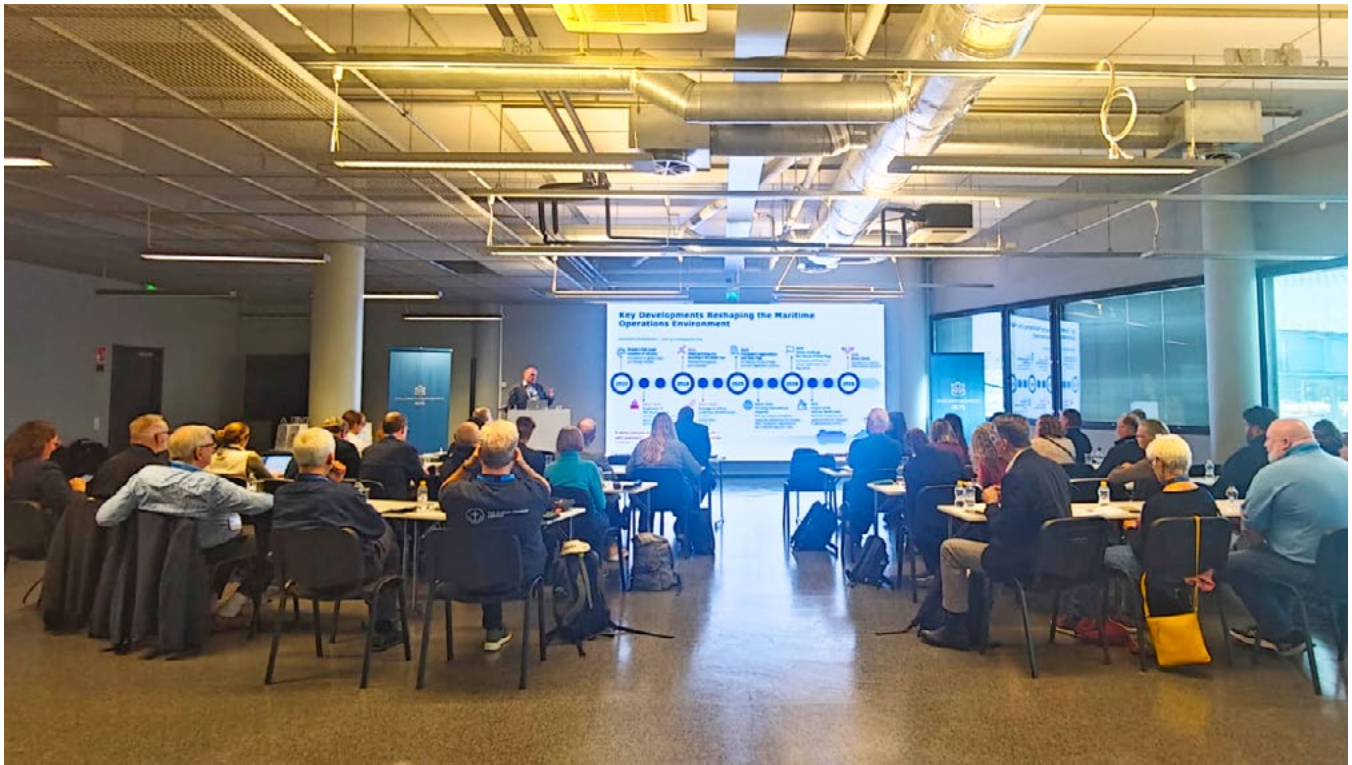


A relationship that begins between one SCI Chaplain and one mariner can, when necessary, extend across an ocean. Likewise, a seafarer arriving in one of the communities SCI serves may already have encountered another member of that network somewhere else in the world.

That continuity is what makes these relationships so valuable.

I left the Northern Europe Regional Meeting grateful for the ideas and perspectives that were shared, but especially grateful for the people doing this work and the relationships we continue to build.

Ships will keep moving from port to port. Mariners will continue crossing borders and oceans. And none of our organizations can be everywhere. But through these relationships, we can make sure that wherever mariners go, someone is there to see them, listen to them, and remind them that they are not alone.



BRINGING GREETINGS TO THE SEAMEN'S MISSION OF ESTONIA IN MUUGA

By the Rev. Mark Nestlehutt
President & Executive Director
of the Seamen's Church Institute

Following the ICMA Northern Europe Regional Meeting in Helsinki, I traveled to Tallinn, Estonia, on the southern coast of the Gulf of Finland to bring official ICMA greetings, visit with the Seamen's Mission of Estonia, and see their center in the Port of Muuga, 11 miles northeast of the capital city of Tallinn. After a tour of the Estonian Maritime Museum, I met up with my host, Pastor Annely Neame, and traveled with her to the Seamen's Mission of Estonia Center just outside the gates to the largest shipping port in Estonia. The Soviets broke ground on the Port of Muuga in the mid-1980s and the Port officially opened in 1986 to import grain and frozen foods. At the time, a large fortress wall cut off access to the port for the neighboring communities who could no longer access the waterfront, shoreline, or beaches near their homes. The wall stood until the last Soviet troops departed in 1994 following Estonia's independence in 1991. The Seamen's Mission of Estonia opened its seafarers' center in Muuga in 1996.

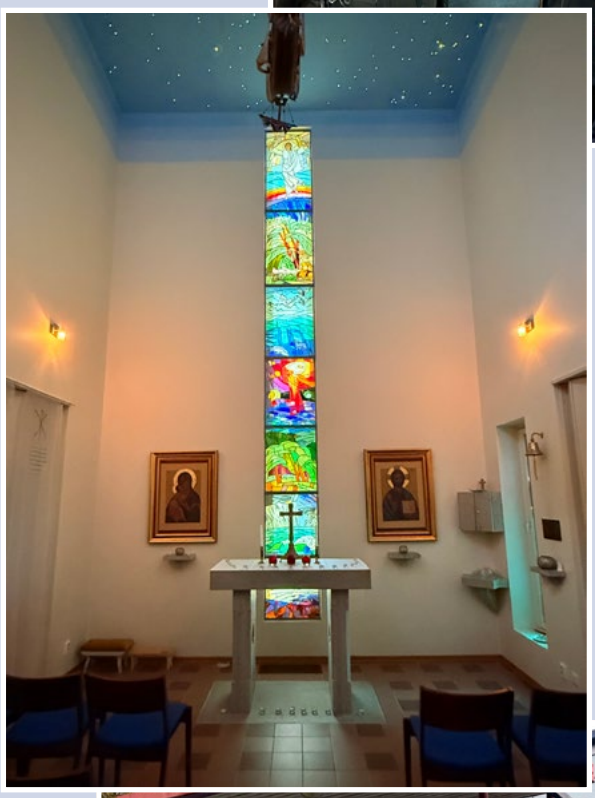
During my visit, I met with longtime Board member, Dr. Eerik Jöks, who has been affiliated with the center since 1996 and joined the Board in 2005. Long supported by the Finnish Seamen's Church Abroad, the Seamen's Mission of Estonia is entering a new phase of leadership under Pastor Neame. I also met with local volunteers Tiina Köömnemägi, and Meelis and Kaile Priimets. After touring their common space, library, sauna, and meeting rooms, we entered their chapel which had been renovated with stained glass by Dolores Hoffmann and icons by Tiina Weisserik. There, we took the opportunity to sing the Taizé chant, "O Lord, hear my prayer," which was deeply moving.

The visit came at an opportune time as the Estonian mission is preparing to celebrate its 30th anniversary in November of this year. I'm reminded of how the ecumenical partnerships of the various seafarer welfare societies and churches around the globe make all seafarer centers and chaplains stronger than the sum of our parts.



Pastor Annely Neame, the Rev. Mark Nestlehutt, and Dr. Eerik Jöks.





Center volunteers Tiina Köömnemägi and Meelis and Kaile Priimets, with Pastor Annely Neame.



The Seamen's Mission of Estonia's chapel and seafarers' center.



SCI'S CENTER FOR MARITIME EDUCATION NAMED A MARAD CENTER OF EXCELLENCE



By Evan Brown
Director of Communications

The Seamen's Church Institute's Center for Maritime Education (CME) has been designated a Center of Excellence for Domestic Maritime Workforce Training and Education by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration (MARAD), recognizing CME's demonstrated success in training and developing the nation's maritime workforce.

The five-year designation places CME among maritime training and education organizations recognized by MARAD for their role in preparing mariners with the skills needed to support the U.S. maritime industry.

For SCI, the recognition reflects decades of investment in practical, industry-driven maritime education. Through training centers in Paducah, KY, and Houston, TX, CME works closely with maritime companies and active mariners to provide training that reflects the vessels, operating environments, and challenges mariners encounter on the job.





“Our approach has always been to listen to the industry and to the mariners doing the work every day,” said Capt. Stephen Polk, Director of SCI’s Center for Maritime Education. “The closer our training reflects the vessels they operate, the waterways they navigate, and the challenges they face on the job, the better prepared they are to operate safely and confidently. This recognition affirms an approach CME has been committed to for decades.”

At the center of that work is advanced simulator-based training. CME’s full-mission bridge simulators allow mariners to practice navigation, vessel handling, bridge resource management, and other complex operations in realistic environments where skills and decision-making can be developed without putting crews, vessels, or infrastructure at risk.

MARAD highlighted the scope of that work in announcing the designation. From 2023 through 2026, CME recorded 5,840 participant completions across 715 training sessions, including approximately 3,600 completions associated with advanced captain and pilot pilothouse operations.

But CME’s work increasingly extends beyond the classroom. SCI collaborates with vessel operators, naval architects, engineers, government agencies, technology providers, and experienced mariners on projects that use simulation to examine real-world maritime challenges. These partnerships include vessel modeling, navigation and infrastructure feasibility studies, simulator research and validation, and evaluating proposed waterways and infrastructure before construction begins. That collaborative approach reflects a fundamental principle behind CME’s work: maritime education is strongest when it remains connected to the people and organizations operating vessels every day.

For SCI, the Center of Excellence designation places CME within a broader national effort to strengthen the maritime workforce. As the industry works to recruit, train, retain, and advance mariners, CME remains committed to connecting education with real-world operations and working alongside the companies and mariners it serves.

“At the heart of SCI’s mission is a commitment to the men and women who build their lives and livelihoods on the water,” said the Rev. Mark Nestlehutt, President & Executive Director of the Seamen’s Church Institute. “Through CME, we have the privilege of helping mariners develop the skills and confidence they need to work safely, advance in their careers, and return home to the people who depend on them. We are grateful for this recognition and remain committed to preparing today’s mariners—and the generations who follow—for safe, rewarding careers in the maritime industry.”

For more than a century, SCI has stood alongside mariners and seafarers, supporting their safety, well-being, and professional lives. MARAD’s Center of Excellence designation recognizes CME’s important role within that continuing mission and the work it does to serve inland and near-coastal mariners. It is recognition of the quality and integrity of CME’s training and a meaningful affirmation of SCI’s enduring commitment to the people at the heart of the maritime industry.

cmetraining.org

CENTER FOR MARINER ADVOCACY
SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE

FROM ASSESSMENT TO ACTION: ADVANCING INLAND MARINER WELLNESS

By Philip C. Schifflin, Jr., Esq.
Director, Center for Mariner Advocacy

Since the release of the *U.S. Inland Mariner Wellness Assessment* in January 2026 and its companion publication, *Partnering to Advance Inland Mariner Wellness*, in June, SCI has continued the conversation with mariners, vessel operators, healthcare professionals, researchers, and others across the inland maritime community. The Assessment gave us a clearer picture of the challenges affecting mariner wellness; these conversations are helping shape what comes next.

Across the industry, there is both a strong awareness of these challenges and a shared commitment to addressing them. With a better understanding of where the needs are, the focus now turns to action: How can we work together to make a meaningful difference in the health and well-being of mariners?

SCI is approaching that question through three connected pathways: Health and Safety, Human Resources, and Chaplaincy. Each offers a different way to improve mariner wellness, but all three share the same goal: ensuring the people who keep the inland maritime industry moving have the support they need to stay healthy, safe, and resilient.

The first pathway focuses on Health and Safety and identifying the health and wellness issues that matter most to the inland maritime industry. Through SCI's Center for Mariner Advocacy (CMA), SCI will bring together vessel operators, healthcare professionals, researchers, and other industry partners to agree on the most important questions and priorities for future research. This will help ensure that research reflects both the needs of inland maritime companies, their operational standards, and the realities of working aboard vessels. By connecting industry experience with research expertise, SCI seeks to focus on efforts where they can have the greatest impact on mariner health and well-being.

SCI wants to build on the industry's longstanding commitment to taking care of its own while creating a stronger foundation for what comes next. The Assessment helped identify the challenges. Now the focus is on action—building consensus, amplifying what is already working, and developing practical approaches that can make a lasting difference in mariners' lives.



Philip C. Schifflin, Jr., Esq.

The second pathway focuses on Human Resources and strengthening a culture of care. Many inland maritime companies view their mariners and employees as family and already offer benefits, programs, and other forms of support. These resources have the greatest impact when mariners know what is available, understand how to access it, and, most importantly, feel comfortable asking for help.

CMA seeks to learn from current HR best practices and work with occupational specialists to better understand what has been effective and where mariners may face barriers to accessing support. By identifying and sharing promising approaches, CMA can work with the industry to establish ways to make resources easier for mariners to find, understand, and use. Just as important is fostering a culture that destigmatizes mental and physical health issues, and encourages people to ask for help.

SCI's third pathway builds on one of its greatest strengths: Chaplaincy. Since 1998, SCI's Ministry on the River (MOR) has provided the nation's only full-time pastoral care ministry dedicated exclusively to inland and Gulf Coastal mariners. MOR Chaplains meet mariners where they are—aboard vessels, during crew changes and new-hire orientations, in times of crisis, or whenever someone needs confidential support and a listening ear.



At its heart, MOR is a ministry of presence. By showing up and staying connected, our Chaplains build trusted relationships with mariners and gain valuable insight into the realities they face. As life and work on the waterways continue to change, MOR will listen to mariners and industry partners to understand how and where Chaplains can best provide support. What we learn through these relationships will help us respond to emerging needs and strengthen the care and resources available to mariners.

In our conversations so far, one message has come through clearly: no single organization can improve mariner wellness alone. While SCI is looking to lead in this effort, progress will require mariners, vessel operators, healthcare providers, researchers, industry associations, HR professionals, chaplains, and others working together.

To download the *U.S. Inland Mariner Wellness Assessment* or *Partnering to Advance Inland Mariner Wellness*, visit SCI's website at **seamenschurch.org**. For more information about SCI's ongoing work to advance mariner wellness, contact Center for Mariner Advocacy Director Phil Schifflin, Jr., Esq., also through the SCI website.



SCI, SEAFARERS, AND SOCCER THROUGH THE YEARS



By Stefan D-W Tisdale
Archivist

This summer, the World Cup brought international soccer back to New Jersey's Meadowlands, just ten miles upstream from SCI's International Seafarers Center, but soccer has been here since its beginnings in America, along with seafarers and SCI.

Post-Civil War New York saw a great flowering of athletic clubs, beginning with elite organizations like the New York Athletic Club (1868) and quickly spreading to more working class clubs, often associated with businesses, and a huge number of clubs associated with the charity settlement houses. The new athletic clubs pursued sports as diverse as boxing, baseball, and club swinging. Some clubs took up soccer, a sport newly-codified by elite English secondary schools and universities in 1863 (and definitively separated from rugby in 1871) that was spreading rapidly wherever the British Empire raised its flag. In America, that flag metaphorically waved over centers of fabric manufacturing as changes in trade laws placed high value on British skilled labor in that field and American cloth manufacturers promised opportunities for skilled workers from Britain who were experiencing employment pressure at home from changing technologies. These laborers started soccer teams and early American soccer competitions pitted textile towns with matches between the likes of Pawtucket, RI and Fall River, MA against Hoboken and the Meadowlands' own Kearny, NJ. Steel workers also competed, including Bethlehem Steel and several New York harbor estuary shipyards, such as Red Hook's Todd Shipyard.

Still, soccer players were rare enough in late 19th century New York that the chance to scrimmage with new faces from an English ship—importing the most up-to-date game play—had an undeniable allure. The earliest record of seafarers playing soccer in the Port of New York dates to 1890. In November of that year, a team from the Cunard liner *Umbria* was defeated by the Brooklyn-based Nonpareil







Club's reserve team, which soccer historian Ed Farnsworth cites as consisting largely of staff from the New York Herald's composing room. Such work-based teams were typical of early sports in New York, especially soccer, and remain relatively common today. The match against the newspapermen must have appealed to the *Umbria*'s crew enough for them to traipse from their North (Hudson) River pier all the way to landlocked Ridgewood, Queens for the game—a daunting feat in the days before the subway system and a long trip even today.



It appears that seafarers had their own soccer tournament by 1891, sponsored by Richard K. Fox, publisher of *The National Police Gazette*. Fox (whose magazine was a perennial favorite among seafarers) was something of a sports impresario, known for sponsoring prizes for a wide array of athletic feats. Possibly as early as 1909, and certainly by 1929, seafarer benevolent organizations were involved in, if not outright running, a seafarer soccer tournament.

Soccer first professionalized in America early in the 20th century. Several important matches were played at Todd Field, a soccer stadium erected as early as 1919 by Todd Shipyard near their drydocks in Red Hook, Brooklyn between Columbia, Lorraine, and Bush Streets. Seafarers continued to play all over the city in non-tournament games against amateur and professional teams (as league regulations or disregard for such regulations allowed). An 1884 *New York Times* article notes that liners would hire professional players in England and Scotland as crew in anticipation of an important match in New York. Likewise, businesses would often give a job to a good player, even importing professional players from Scotland and England to work for the company while juicing its soccer team.

The Great Depression and World War II put an end to American professional soccer, but by April 1949, seafarer benevolent organizations, including SCI, were formalizing plans for reviving the seafarer soccer tournament. A May 1st *New York Times* article quotes the Norwegian Seamen's Social Welfare Commissioner saying they had an arrangement with the Parks Department for the use of a soccer field in Brooklyn. It seems likely that this refers to Red Hook Stadium, a Robert Moses-era project from 1935. However, it's possible that it refers to Todd Field, the soccer stadium built by Todd Shipyard for its soccer teams.

The article also notes that other soccer fields were in use, including one in Van Cortlandt Park and the stadium at Randall's Island for big matches. Nonetheless, the article states a preference for a dedicated field for international seafarer soccer. SCI seized an opportunity to establish such a field on the newly landfilled tidal marsh meadowlands of Port Newark in 1961. That field would host soccer matches as well as an annual international sports week in coordination with Norwegian seafarer benevolent interests into the 1990s.

After a generation of hard play, the landfill supporting SCI's soccer field no longer met our safety standards and the field was given over to geese and more casual uses. Meanwhile, the Norwegian Maritime Authority organized a soccer tournament for cruise ship crews until the Covid-19 pandemic.

HONORING LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORTING SEAFARERS AT SCI'S 2026 SILVER BELL AWARDS

The Seamen's Church Institute welcomed 635 maritime leaders and professionals to Chelsea Piers in New York City on June 11 for its 48th Annual Silver Bell Awards Dinner. The evening celebrated the maritime industry and honored two distinguished leaders: John Wobensmith, Chairman & CEO of Genco Shipping & Trading Ltd., who received the Silver Bell Award, and Adm. Linda Fagan, USCG, Ret., 27th Commandant, who received SCI's Lifetime Achievement Award. The event raised more than $825,000 to support SCI's ministry and services for mariners and seafarers worldwide.



Adm. Linda Fagan (USCG, Ret.) received the Seamen's Church Institute's Lifetime Achievement Award, presented by Douglas Stevenson, Esq., former Director of SCI's Center for Seafarers' Rights (now Center for Mariner Advocacy).

Presented annually, the Silver Bell and Lifetime Achievement Awards recognize leaders whose contributions have strengthened the maritime industry and demonstrated an enduring commitment to the well-being of those who serve at sea and on the waterways. Accepting the Lifetime Achievement Award, Adm. Fagan praised SCI's work, noting that the organization brings "humanity and empathy" to mariners and seafarers facing difficult circumstances and expressed her gratitude for the recognition and SCI's mission.

Wobensmith reflected on the colleagues, mentors, and friends who shaped his career, emphasizing that the honor



Pictured (from left): the Rev. Mark Nestlehutt of the Seamen's Church Institute; John C. Wobensmith, father and former Secretary of State for Maryland; Brian ("Buckley") McAllister, Esq., of McAllister Towing and Silver Bell Event Co-Chair; John Wobensmith of Genco Shipping & Trading Ltd., 2026 Silver Bell Award honoree; and John ("Jack") Noonan of Binnacle Maritime LLC and Silver Bell Event Co-Chair.



belonged as much to the people he has worked alongside as to himself. He described the award as a celebration of SCI's mission, the maritime community, and the mariners and seafarers whose work connects the world every day.

"This year, we were proud to recognize John and Linda—two exemplary leaders whose compassion, dedication, and service have made a lasting impact on the maritime industry and the people who power it," said SCI President & Executive Director the Rev. Mark Nestlehutt. "We are deeply grateful for the extraordinary generosity of our supporters, which enables SCI to continue serving mariners and seafarers around the world."

The evening opened with SCI's traditional Blessing of the Fleet procession on the Hudson River, led by the Rt. Rev. Matthew Heyd, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. Guests also paid tribute to former SCI Trustee Jim Lawrence, whose contributions to the maritime industry and SCI were honored through a commemorative video and remarks from his son-in-law, Jonathan Chia of MTI Network USA.

SCI extends its sincere thanks to the Silver Bell Executive Committee, co-chaired by John ("Jack") Noonan of Binnacle Maritime LLC and Brian ("Buckley") McAllister of McAllister Towing, as well as the many sponsors, supporters, and attendees whose generosity made the evening a success. Proceeds from the event support SCI's chaplaincy services, mariner advocacy, crisis response, and research initiatives that advance safe and sustainable maritime operations.



Members of the Women's International Shipping & Trading Association (WISTA) CT and NY/NJ Chapters.



Continues on next page









The parade of vessels during the opening of the 48th Annual Silver Bell Awards Dinner at Chelsea Piers along the Hudson River in New York City.



YOUR MOST MEANINGFUL GIFT MIGHT ALREADY BE IN YOUR PORTFOLIO

As the holiday season approaches, our thoughts naturally turn to giving—to finding just the right gift for the people and causes that matter most to us.

But what if the most meaningful gift you could give SCI isn't something you need to purchase at all?

It may already be sitting in your portfolio.

Nonprofit organizations like SCI are able to carry out their missions because of the generosity of people who believe in the work they do. Our donors make it possible for SCI to be there for mariners today—and, importantly, to prepare for the needs of tomorrow.

One way to help ensure that future is through a planned or legacy gift.

A planned gift doesn't necessarily mean setting aside additional cash. Often, it involves assets you already have, such as a retirement account, securities, or life insurance. With thoughtful planning, these assets can become a lasting expression of the people, places, and causes that matter to you most.

And that is what I find so meaningful about planned giving. It is more than a financial decision. It is a way to say, I believe this work should continue.

A legacy gift to SCI can help carry your commitment to mariners into the next decade and beyond. It allows your values to become part of SCI's future and helps ensure that generations of mariners will continue to have access to the support, resources, and care they need.

If you are considering a planned gift, I would be delighted to speak with you confidentially about your goals and the possibilities available to you. We always recommend consulting your financial advisor or tax attorney before making any charitable gift, as everyone's circumstances are different.

When the time is right, I hope you'll reach out. I would love to hear from you. You can reach me at **+1 212.349.9090** or at **amugavero@seamenschurch.org**.

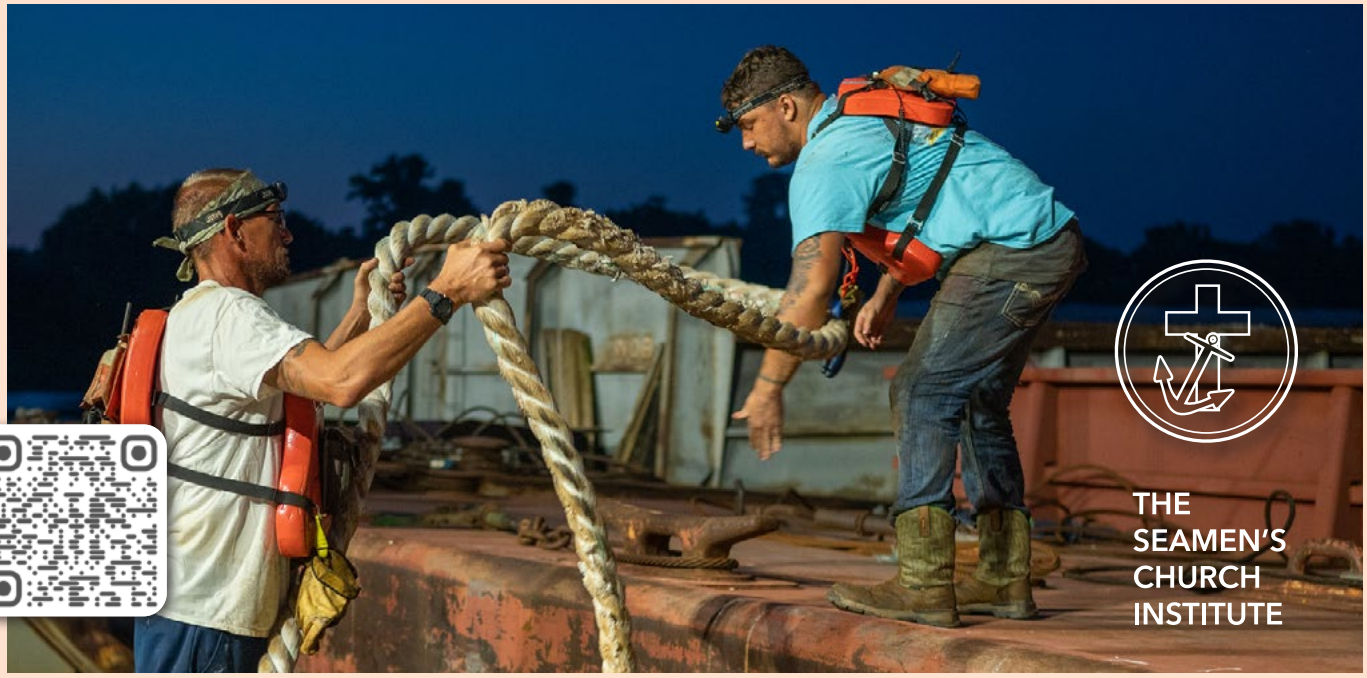
If you have already included SCI in your estate plans, please accept my heartfelt thanks. Your generosity is a powerful statement of confidence in SCI.

If you are considering making SCI part of your legacy, we look forward to welcoming you to our Roper Legacy Society.

The holidays remind us that giving is about more than what we give today. Sometimes, the most meaningful gifts are the ones that continue giving long into the future.



Amy Mugavero
Director, Advancement & Strategic Initiatives



At The Helm



JOHN HADJIPATERAS

Chairman, CEO, and President
DORIAN LPG LTD.

Who were some important mentors or role models for you?

Both my grandfathers were Captains and Shipowners. I was exposed from an early age to people who understood that shipping is ultimately a business built on hard work, perseverance, relationships, reputation, and long-term thinking.

I was lucky to have met many of the all-time greats yet I'm still learning, and some of the most valuable lessons are from people who do not have a high visibility; they might be working on a ship or in a store and they are distinguished by their dedication to family values, and the pursuit of excellence in their work.

Do you remember your first leadership role? How has your view of leadership evolved over time?

I began working in shipping about fifty-five years ago and became Managing Director of a family owned firm before the age of 23. Managing people who are much older is a challenge requiring humility but also resolve and always leading by example.

Shipping has a way of reminding you that you cannot control everything. Markets change, geopolitical circumstances change, and unexpected events occur. Good leadership requires listening, being prepared, making decisions with the information available, and having the discipline to adjust when circumstances change and always adhering to your values.

What is your view on the impact of organizational culture in individual and company performance?

There is no greater influence on an organization's performance than the shared values that drive individual initiatives and responses in critical situations.

My great-grandfather, who was orphaned at the age of twelve, wrote that when he started trading on his own, doors were opened for him by people who had dealt with and respected his father for his honesty and reliability. There is no greater asset than reputation.



Warren Buffett recently said of his successor as Chairman of Berkshire Hathaway:

"He will guard its culture and its values–both worth more than anything on our balance sheet".

What advice would you give someone who is beginning a career in the maritime industry? How do you hire? What do you seek in a candidate?

Welcome to an industry that is necessary and enduring.

If you're intellectually curious, dedicated to continuous learning, if you're willing to set high standards and respect the sea, you are in for a very interesting career. It can take you all over the world and you will meet people from all nationalities and different backgrounds who are bound together by a love for what they do, be it at sea or ashore, be it in operations, finance, innovation, insurance, engineering, manufacturing or any other aspect.

And like them, you too, will be a Citizen of the Sea.

In a candidate, I'm looking for intellectual curiosity, respect for the value and work of others, and willingness to persevere in learning and in dealing with problems.

What is the role of innovation in your work?

In my lifetime I have dealt with ships propelled by reciprocating engines, steam turbines, and internal combustion engines, fueled by heavy fuel oil and LPG.

The current transition toward cleaner energy and more efficient ships creates challenges and opportunities.

I started work at a time when most business was conducted in shipping centers like New York, London and Piraeus where on a stroll round the block you invariably ran into insurance people, charterers, brokers, bankers, and owners. So much was done in person and it was easy to develop relationships.

Technology has changed the way we interact with people, operate ships, analyze markets, manage risk, and make investment decisions.

And we are at the threshold of a new era, AI and AGI will accelerate change, hopefully for the better.

What inspires you?

I am inspired by people who love what they do and who continue to learn throughout their careers. Also by people who have made sacrifices while adhering to high values.

I am inspired by people who have invented, created, maintained, contributed and shared, who though they may be successful, are always humble.

Is there something else you'd like to say?

Supporting SCI and organizations like it is an imperative value.

I am grateful to the many people who devote their lives to helping others. And for the many whose life's work involves preservation of nature's biodiversity and cultural heritage.

It is never too late, or too early, to notice those who are tirelessly devoted to doing good in our universe of shipping.

Respect those who support and care for our seafarers and the sea.

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CHRISTMAS AT SEA:
A LIFELINE OF WARMTH AND CONNECTION



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Each year, volunteers from all 50 states and beyond handcraft thousands of knitted and crocheted garments, sew ditty bags, and write heartfelt cards for mariners and seafarers spending the holidays far from home. These gifts are reminders that they are kept in mind and that their work is valued.

While donations are accepted year-round, our packing groups gather between October and December to prepare the gifts for delivery during the Christmas season. The carefully packed boxes and Santa sacks are distributed each December to seafarers at the Port of New York and New Jersey and at inland ports along the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers.

We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who donates, packs, and delivers in support of this enduring program. To learn more, visit **seamenschurch.org/cas**. We also celebrate our dedicated volunteer fiber artists with shoutouts every Monday and Wednesday on the **SCI Facebook page** and **Instagram page**. For deeper engagement, our **Untangled online community** is open to members for sharing questions, articles, and project photos in a supportive, creative space. We look forward to connecting with you!