



Winter 2009

St. Nicholas' Bag

The Newsletter of the Baltimore International Seafarers' Center

Current Board officers & members

Bud Nixon, President
Baltimore Port Alliance

Allene Taylor, Vice-President
Volunteer Associate Chaplain,
Baltimore International Seafarers' Center

Patrick Arey Esq., Treasurer
Abramoff Neuberger and Linder LLP

The Rev. Mary Davisson, Secretary
Director, Baltimore International
Seafarers' Center

Donald Carroll
T. Parker Host of Maryland

Rupert Denney
C. Steinweg (Baltimore), Inc.

Michael Derby
Wallenius Wilhelmsen Logistics

Nora Garman
Delaware-Maryland Synod of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Rev. Canon Mary Glasspool
Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

Capt. George Miller
Association of Maryland Pilots

The Rev. Lois Nehmer
Luther Memorial Lutheran Church

The Rev. Joseph Pagano
Emmanuel Church, Baltimore

The Rt. Rev. John Rabb
Suffragan Bishop of Maryland

Michael Reagoso
McAllister Towing of Baltimore, Inc.

Douglas Stevenson Esq.
Center for Seafarers' Rights,
Seamen's Church Institute
of New York and New Jersey

PHOTO at far right - Volunteer
Lee Van Koten looks over some
of our magazines and religious
pamphlets in Spanish, Chinese,
Russian, and English.

As easy as one two three!

The three days in fall 2008 described below weren't always easy, but they were always rewarding! (*We omit dates and some details to preserve privacy.*)

DAY ONE - four of us visited a total of nine different crews from Fairfield to Locust Point to Dundalk, some "cold calls" and some in response to phone calls. Some were too busy to disembark, but appreciated relaxed conversations. Five groups went shopping in Seafarers' Center vans with Don Bryant and other volunteers.

Highlights: Allene Taylor had a long conversation with a novice seafarer who'd had almost no news from home (Georgia-the one in Eastern Europe) for over two months. Bob Garske brought a cell phone and bought a long list of hygiene items for an Egyptian crew detained on board (no U.S. visas). Mary Davisson met with the newest captain on a vessel detained here several months and provided Spanish newspapers (see p. 3). She also visited a hospitalized seafarer and met with his brother (just arrived from the Philippines), ITF Inspector Arthur Petitpas, and a representative from the firm handling his expenses.

DAY TWO - five of us visited seven vessels. Again, several visits were at agent or crew advance request. Pam Cady brought Russian magazines to a Russian-speaking crew, Wayne Dornbirer took Filipino seafarers shopping, and Lee Van Koten continued errands for the Egyptian crew. Mary also attended a Port community funeral and then spent two hours at a hospital conference. In the evening, ship visitor Dick Nagel's wife Jackie Nagel kindly staffed the Center for visitors from vessels docked nearby in Locust Point.

DAY THREE - calls from crews began at 7:25 A.M! Three of us served six crews. Allene listened to accounts of 12-hour shifts and homesickness on one vessel. Eventually, we were able to provide them three shopping trips, scheduled around U.S. Coast Guard visits. Mary spent over two hours on a container ship with a tight schedule, followed by an afternoon of non-stop shuttling: three shopping trips and one Center visit. Evening volunteer Darrell Dempster transported five different crews! He also learned that one crew member had been bereaved, and Allene followed up the next day.



WE HAVE WHEELS!

In August 2008, the Baltimore International Seafarers' Center was honored with a grant of \$30,000 from the ITF Seafarers' Trust for a third van. Previously, we'd had times when three volunteers were available, at least three crews wanted transportation, but we had a shortage of vehicles. Arthur Petitpas, Baltimore's International Transport Workers' Federation Inspector, assisted the Center with the grant application. Arthur is in touch with Director Mary Davison and Center volunteers whenever needed about seafarers' labor issues (see p. 3), continuing a relationship begun under founding Director Ed Munro.



at top: ITF Inspector Arthur Petitpas in front of our new 12-passenger Ford van; at bottom: Crew members with Director Mary Davison in the Center parking lot.

Plastic or Cloth?

Free reading matter is a welcome bonus during our ship visits. Typically, we bring a prayer leaflet, Seafarers' Center information, *Sports Illustrated*, *National Geographic*, and news magazines, with Bibles available for all who ask. These used to



be delivered in plastic grocery bags. Thanks to a grant from St. Anne's Episcopal Church, Annapolis, we now use cloth bags with our logo. Staffer John Thompson (formerly of St. Anne's), who helped arrange this grant, is shown here with volunteer Pam Cady (of Messiah Episcopal Church, Baltimore).

be delivered in plastic grocery bags. Thanks to a grant from St. Anne's Episcopal Church, Annapolis, we now use cloth bags with our logo. Staffer John Thompson (formerly of St. Anne's), who helped arrange this

We are most grateful to acknowledge a donation of \$2,500 from the **Hess Corporation** in summer 2008. Elizabeth S. Hughes, Vice President of **Vane Brothers**, writes, "*Vane Brothers partners with Hess in our service as a marine transport corporation. At a meeting with Hess in July, we discussed the work of the Seafarers' Center here, and Hess offered to send a contribution in support of the Center's mission.*"

Also in the Port Community, the **Propeller Club Charitable Trust** recently honored us with a grant of \$3,000 to support our work in the Port of Baltimore.

Finally, thank you to the **Church of the Redeemer** in North Baltimore for once more supporting our much-needed cell phone loan program with an Outreach grant of \$1,200.

HOW THE CENTER CAN HELP CREWS ON ARRESTED VESSELS:

The *Snow Bird* was docked in Baltimore for over 9 months because of unpaid bills and mechanical deficiencies. For the first five months, no crew were allowed off the vessel. We're not maritime lawyers, but we were able to help!

- We visited weekly and often daily, carried out dozens of personal errands for crew, and brought Russian and Spanish materials regularly.
- By invitation, we attended meetings with the ship's Captain, an International Transport Workers' Federation representative, and the U.S. Coast Guard.
- We brought a loaner phone and phone cards with good minutes to Latin America.
- We received e-mails on behalf of crew members and delivered e-mails for crew.
- We stayed in contact with the Coast Guard about provisions.



- Center Board member Douglas Stevenson, Esq. (Director, Center for Seafarers' Rights, Seamens Church Institute, New York) also visited the crew.



- A retired attorney who volunteers for our Center updated us regularly on any legal decisions regarding the vessel which were a matter of public record.

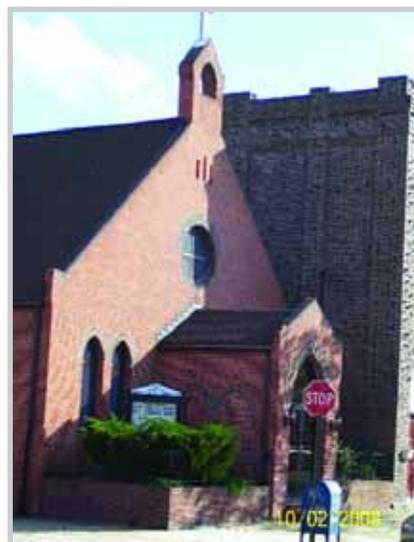
at top: Center for Seafarers' Rights (Seamens Church Institute, New York) Director Douglas Stevenson (right), a member of the BISC Board, poses with Captain Peter and Director Mary Davisson. The birthday cake had been brought on board by ITF Inspector Arthur Petitpas (see p. 2).

- We passed on crew's requests for (Roman Catholic) Communion to Stella Maris.
- When crew members wanted to sign off, we researched air fares, contacted terminal management and Customs and Border Patrol with respect to paperwork, and provided rides to BWI, Reagan National, and Dulles Airports.

at bottom: In September, the crew finally obtained shore leave and enjoyed some visits to the Center.

While Russians, Ukrainians, and Georgians were still on board, we brought a Ukrainian-American former seafarer to interpret. Spanish speakers who constituted first some and then all of the crew, appreciated a visit from Hector Rodriguez, Director of Latino Ministries for the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland.

When the crew finally obtained shore leave in September, several enjoyed relaxing evenings at our Center.



In August 2008, the **Episcopal Church of the Redemption** in Locust Point welcomed officers and crew of the *U.S.S. Sterett*, a brand-new destroyer being commissioned at the South Locust Point Terminal. Thirty-five men and women enjoyed a hearty cooked breakfast, and many stayed on to attend worship. The following weekend, the Rector and several parishioners attended the commissioning ceremony, and the captain, Cdr. Brian Eckerle, named the church an "honorary plankowner." When not guest preaching, Baltimore International Seafarers' Center Director Mary Davisson assists the Rector, the Rev. Annette Chappell, at Sunday worship. The congregation also provides magazines for seafarers, financial donations, Christmas at Sea boxes, and an ecumenical mailing team, organized by parishioner Brenda Kovacs, for this newsletter.

The Church of the Redemption has a long history of welcoming and assisting seafarers, and at one time was home base for the ministry that evolved into the Baltimore International Seafarers' Center.

Christmas at Sea 2008 — Update

St. Nicholas is the traditional patron of seafarers as well as a Yuletide benefactor. This year, about 700 Christmas at Sea boxes were delivered to over 30 crews by hard-working volunteers. It's a challenge to get 23 boxes (for an average-sized crew) up a steep gangway, but it puts smiles on the faces of seafarers who may have spent seven consecutive Christmases away from their families.

WHY DO WE DO THIS?

- Some seafarers make such small salaries that a warm hat, socks, and toiletries truly help their budget.
- Some are moderately well paid (compared to salaries in their homelands), but can't do their own shopping because they have either no U.S. visas or no free time in port.
- Even the lucky ones who are able to shop for themselves often find Christmas the loneliest time of year. And some are so grateful for this sign of Christmas that they thank us again on returning to Baltimore one to two years later.



HOW DO WE DO THIS?

Only with the help of dozens of faith groups, community groups, and individuals. 2008 Christmas at Sea donors included: Episcopal churches and groups: St. George's (Mt. Savage), St. Matthias, Messiah, Sherwood, Nativity Cedarcroft, St. John's (Kingsville), St. Paul's (Mt. Airy), St. David's, Society of the Companions of the Holy Cross, Redemption, Cathedral of the Incarnation, Diocese of Maryland, Holy Trinity (Essex), St. John's in the Village, Old St. Paul's, St. Mark's (Highland), Holy Cross (The Rocks).

Lutheran congregations and groups: Ascension, Augsburg Lutheran Village, St. Paul, Christ Church (Millersville), Salem Lutheran Boy Scout Troop 462, Grace (Westminster), St. John's (Westminster), Jerusalem (Westminster), Our Redeemer (Glen Burnie), Augsburg Lutheran Church, Good Shepherd, St. Martin's (Annapolis), Luther Memorial, Reformation, Christus Victor, St. John's (Linthicum), St. Peter's.

Others: St. Matthias School, S.L. Matzko, Catholic Daughters, The Rev. Lance Gifford, M.R. Chelton.

Knitted or crocheted items were contributed by a number of individuals, including participants of the Claggett "Holy Hands" conference, and hygiene kits as well as knitted items by the Baltimore Baptist Association and Middle River Baptist Church.

If we have omitted or misspelled your name, please feel free to contact us.

at right: Members of St. George's, Mt. Savage, came all the way from Western Maryland to deliver their gifts. Their visit included a Eucharist in the Center chapel, with the Rev. Elizabeth Webster officiating and the Rev. Linda Hollis serving as deacon.



at top: The Captain of the *Lowlands Camellia* sent this photo, along with a lovely thank-you note, too long for inclusion here.

middle photo: Students from St. Matthias' School (Roman Catholic) in Lanham visited the Center to deliver Christmas boxes. They were accompanied by their teacher, the Rev. Michelle Doran, an Episcopal deacon.



— CRUISE 2008 —

How can we thank you all for your support of our Fall 2008 Harbor Cruise?

The Association of Maryland Pilots provided exhibits and a painting by Capt. Brian Hope to raffle. The Baltimore Maritime Exchange, the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland, and the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America helped us spread the word. The Maryland Port Administration provided expert narration by JB Hanson. Board member Mike Derby of Wallenius Wilhelmsen Logistics put us in touch with Nautical Destinations, who arranged our evening on the *Duchess of Pintail*. More information on this lovely vessel is available at 410-269-4213.

Mark your calendar: our 2009 cruise is tentatively set for October 7!

Oops- did you miss our 2008 cruise? You can still support the work of the Center! See p. 7 on volunteering and p. 8 on financial support.



The newest Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland, the Rt. Rev. Eugene Sutton, chats with the Rev. Linda Hollis, the Rev. Tony Hollis, and the Rev. Mary Davisson (Center Director). Linda, a deacon, and Tony, a priest, both volunteer at the Center. Bishop Sutton was consecrated in June 2008, with volunteer Associate Chaplain Allene Taylor carrying the Center banner, Linda and Mary serving as Eucharistic ministers, staffer John Thompson carrying the Church of the Redeemer banner, and Tony as well as founding Director Bro. Ed Munro joining the clergy in procession.

How Else Does the Center Help Seafarers?

You've read about our ministry on the front page. More examples appear on p. 3 and elsewhere. But there's almost no end to the ways we reach out:

- An MSC crew member in summer 2007 said that Mr. Terrance Robinson of Baltimore had kindly written his home (in the Philippines) after finding his camera. Mr. Robinson hadn't mentioned a telephone number, so we drove the seafarer to his Southwest Baltimore address and left a note. Mr. Robinson eventually delivered the camera, but the ship had sailed. In 2008, we shipped the camera to an office in Houston at the e-mailed request of the seafarer.

- A Baltimorean originally from Myanmar contacted us to say that his brother had arrived that day on another MSC vessel. None of the crew had visas, so could we get the Baltimore resident on board before the ship sailed that evening? After some juggling, we were able to arrange a reunion between the Baltimorean, his brother, and another crew member from their home town (see photo to right).



- Our ministry to a recently hospitalized seafarer was truly ecumenical! Lee Van Koten (Presbyterian) was asked by the Captain of a vessel he was visiting to contact the Rev. Mary Davisson (Episcopal) about visiting a newly hospitalized crew member. The patient wasn't awake, but Mary left a page of ministry- and Port-related phone numbers with hospital staff, which helped them track down some of the patient's connections back home. Mary then visited the crew before they sailed and assured them that the patient was receiving excellent care.

Meanwhile, since the patient had come in with a rosary, Baptist ship visitor Don Bryant contacted the hospital's lay Catholic chaplain, a friend of his. Over the next weeks, Mary and Don visited and coordinated with the Catholic hospital chaplain. When the patient's brother flew into Baltimore, the Seafarers' Center provided free phone cards and other help, while the staff chaplain helped him connect with local residents from his homeland. Mary also attended meetings with the ITF inspector, hospital social worker, and others.

It's All about the Relationships —

Director Mary Davisson and Center volunteers do all in their power to strengthen relationships with the **Port, churches, and the larger community.** During the second half of 2008, Mary preached, spoke, or gave an invocation at: St. Anne's Episcopal Church, Annapolis; Episcopal Church of the Redemption, Baltimore; Memorial Episcopal Church, Baltimore; Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Baltimore; the Propeller Club International Convention; the Claggett Center conference on "Holy Hands and Hearts: Sharing Handwork Ministries"; Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Dundalk; and St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Washington County. Additionally, along with volunteer Associate Chaplain Allene Taylor, Mary attended the 2008 National Maritime Ministries Association Convention in Boston, where she celebrated at one of the Episcopal-Lutheran Eucharists. Allene and Mary both attend a wide variety of Port gatherings in Baltimore.

Some of our relationships with seafarers are over a decade old! In the photo below, from left to right, Captain Roland Aysgarth of the *Elektra*, Center founders Bro. Ed Munro and Barbara Munro, and Associate Chaplain Allene Taylor enjoy a reunion.



The crews meeting us for the first time also appreciate the welcome we are happy to offer. The Captain of the *Priscilla Venture* wrote to their shipping agent, that

"we were very pleased with the service [the Center] provided with one set of cell phone, phone cards and taking our seamen to shore for shopping. For the short period of time [in port 1 1/2 days], what they have done for our crew members we will not forget for a long, long time. Please convey our gratefulness to them. We wish all those wonderful people who are providing their voluntary service long life and all the blessings of God."

The Baltimore International Seafarers' Center deeply regrets to announce the death of long-time volunteer and benefactor **Roger White** in December, 2008. Roger gave generously of his time and resources to our ministry. We extend our condolences to Roger's family and friends. He will be deeply missed.



Baltimore International Seafarers' Center

Director: The Rev. Mary H.T. Davisson

Associate Chaplain: Allene Taylor

Office Assistants: Tina Jordan, John Thompson, Jim Johnstone, Jackie Nagel, Tony Hollis, Carrie Cass

Ship Visitors: Suresh Ahluwalia, Don Bryant, Pamela Cady, Darrell Dempster, Gene Doan, Wayne Dornbire, Bob Garske, Linda Hollis, Ed Munro, Dick Nagel, Peter Randrup, Leland Van Koten

St. Nicholas' Bag Newsletter — writing & editing: Mary Davisson; design & production: Anne Clewell

The Baltimore International Seafarers' Center extends condolences to the family and friends of **Bro. Jim Horan, S.J.**, who died on August 29. Bro. Jim had been volunteering at the Stella Maris International Seafarers' Center as well as Our Daily Bread. In the 1990's, he worked with Bro. Ed Munro and Associate Chaplain Allene Taylor of the Baltimore International Seafarers' Center.

**Did you miss the opportunity to participate in
Christmas at Sea 2008 or to offer year-round hospitality?**

Please contact us about Christmas 2009. And please remember that seafarers work on our behalf year-round and should be offered hospitality year-round!

Lee Van Koten (photo p. 1), who began visiting crews in 2008, writes: *"I love this work-by far the most rewarding volunteer work I've ever done. In a single week, I met people from multiple cultures, welcomed them to Baltimore, enabled them to talk with their loved ones, learned about (from a Dutch chief cook) the town where my family name originated, and enabled people who wanted a Bible to get them in their native language?"*

(Not to mention his trek from a Catonsville Chinese restaurant to a Rockville Chinese supermarket, where he finally obtained the particular type of Mah Jongg set requested by a crew!)

If you are in reasonably good health (able to climb steps), can commit to several hours a week, will respect the dignity of seafarers from every culture, and will follow security rules, please contact us about volunteering as a ship visitor.

To learn more about volunteering, please call 410.685.1240 or write baltseafarers@aol.com.



VOLUNTEER SHIP VISITOR

Suresh Ahluwalia

brings his experience as Commander (in the Indian Navy) and as Master Mariner to his work with the Baltimore International Seafarers' Center. (However, experience at sea or in port is not required for volunteers; many of us started from scratch!)

*Happy to support the
important work of the
Baltimore International
Seafarers' Center*



Official Fumigators for the Port of Baltimore

(610) 595-2100 or (800) 542-1542

www.westernfumigation.com



The Baltimore International Seafarers' Center
1430 Wallace Street | Baltimore, MD 21230
410.685.1240 | baltseafarers@aol.com | www.baltseafarers.ang-md.org

SPACE FOR YOUR NAME HERE!

We are very grateful for very special donations in the second half of 2008 from the Baltimore Community Foundation, the Baltimore Propeller Club Charitable Trust, St. John's (Kingsville), Middleham & St. Peter's (Episcopal) Solomons, Bro. Ed Munro and Ms. Barbara Munro, and the Association of Maryland Pilots.

We would also like to thank the following: the Rev. Joanna White, Ms. Gloria Petit-Clair, an anonymous Board member, Mr. Kenneth Sumner, Ms. Joan Bolton, Mr. Joseph and Ms. Susan Spicer (in honor of the Revs. Tony and Linda Hollis), Walter and Barbara Clifford, Ms. Helen Wheeler, Doug and Eloise Brown, the Revs. Tony and Linda Hollis, Kathy and Hugh Stierhoff, Ms. Cynthia Cocke, St. Martin's-in-the-Field, the Rev. Lydia Martin, Ms. Steuart Thomsen, Ms. Alice Bockman, Holy Trinity (Episcopal) Bowie, Capt. Michael Prenger, Mr. Mark Tilyou, the Rev. Jane Mayrer, Capt. George Miller, Mr. Donald W. Carroll, the Rev. Mary Davisson, Anne

and Sheldon Slater, Ms. Fay Willey, Ms. Martha Yeager, Ms. Brenda Kovacs, Ms. Sidney Turner, Ms. M. R. Chelton, John and Ashby Thompson, Mr. Bill Koller, Producers Video, Ms. Mary Snead. The churches where Mary spoke or preached (p. 6) have also supported the Center (Baltimore area unless otherwise noted): Memorial (Episcopal), Redemption (Episcopal), Emmanuel (Episcopal), Good Shepherd (Lutheran), St. Mark's (Lappans).

Thank you also to volunteer Lee Van Koten for donating a Webcam, to Western Fumigation for supporting our mailing costs, and to Wallenius Wilhelmsen Logistics for helping us keep our vans clean.

Don't see your name here? Please contact us if we accidentally omitted to include it. But if you accidentally omitted to donate, please send your check to the Baltimore International Seafarers' Center, 1430 Wallace St., Baltimore MD 21230.



New security rules implemented in December have prevented even seafarers with visas from walking to telephones in many terminals. (For more on "TWIC" rules, see our next issue.) Requests for cell phone loans from the Center have greatly increased. Please donate generously so that we can give seafarers as many phone minutes as possible to contact their loved ones.