

St. Nicholas' Bag

The Newsletter of the Baltimore
International Seafarers' Center Summer 2012



Director's Desk: The World is Bigger than Baltimore, and the Port is Bigger than Dundalk!



View of ships in Canton in early February

In my teens, I assisted with the start-up of a Girl Scout troop at a small urban church as one of my first volunteer gigs. One of the songs we learned started out, **"When you think you're looking wide, look wider still. Behold the world that lies outside, beyond your sill."**

Little did I imagine how dramatically that would be reflected in the vocation where God would call me. The articles, "Around the World in

One Day," and "Some Weeks are Especially Blessed" (p. 3) give some idea of the **diversity of people** we at the BISC have been honored to meet. Soon after writing those articles, I was privileged to meet my first all-Egyptian crew in several years, and later my first all-Vietnamese crew ever. As an American, I'm humbled by the ability of so many seafarers to learn considerable English and to orient quickly to American regulations and culture. And I'm endlessly grateful for the hospitality they offer in their floating workplace/homes.

I also keep widening my view of this port.

Some Marylanders only think of the Port of Baltimore as Seagirt (the terminal with the big blue cranes visible near Exit 56 of I-95) and Dundalk Marine Terminal, its next-door neighbor. While these are certainly big players,

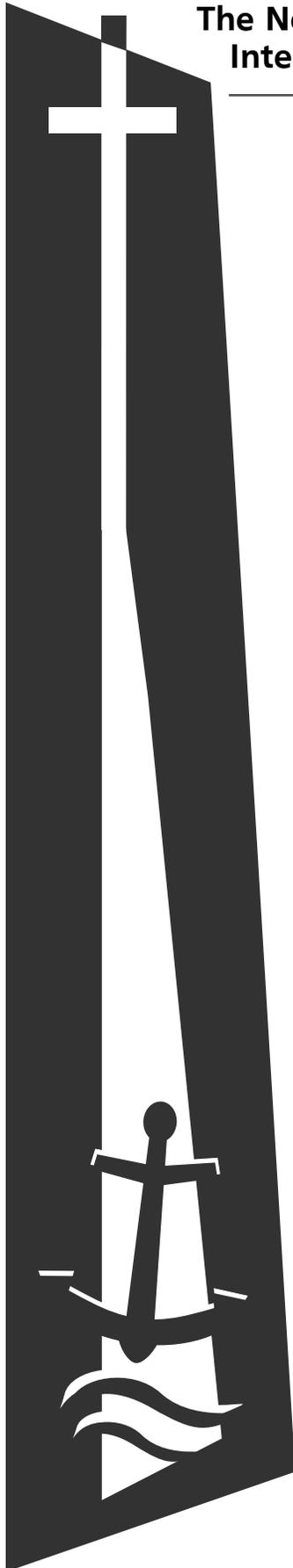


Crew members from the **Simon Schulte**, the largest "sugar ship" to visit Locust Point. [photo credit: Lee Van Koten, a member of Catonsville Presbyterian who volunteers two evenings a week]

BISC volunteers and chaplains have also been visiting terminals in Canton, Locust Point (article p. 2), Fairfield, and sometimes Curtis Bay for many years. We are grateful that Pastor Gerry Rickel and new volunteer Larry Long (pp. 5, 6) are enhancing coverage of our diverse port, and that new volunteer Jane Parker (p. 6) is helping us welcome visitors from around the world.



Busy Locust Point in mid-January



BISC

Baltimore International
Seafarers' Center

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Lively Times in Locust Point—and Elsewhere



None of us at BISC can remember seeing two vessels docked at **North Locust Point 4** (NLP4), the state dock visible from our back window, at the same time as a vessel from **Steinweg**, the private dock at the end of our street. But that's what happened one week in January! We visited the **African Oryx** at Steinweg twice (they had no visas for shore leave), and we took 16 seafarers out from the **Harbel Cutlass** at North Locust Point. We also provided several rides for the other NLP4 ship, the **AS Victoria**, which stayed in port longer. That same week, we lent a phone to the **Schippersgracht**, docked for just one day nearby at **South Locust Point**. The **Lisa J.**, which spent weeks "just down the street" at Domino Sugar, had previously received 6 rides, including 3 visits to our Center.

And that's just in Locust Point! We continued to get to almost every vessel docked at Dundalk, Seagirt, Consolidated Coal, Rukert, Fairfield, Atlantic, and Chesapeake, as well as some in Curtis Bay.

BISC Serves Largest "Sugar Ship" to ever Visit Baltimore

In April, a massive, 600-ft. long cargo ship, the **Simon Schulte**, docked at the Domino Sugar plant in Locust Point to deliver the largest single shipment of raw sugar in the plant's 90-year history – a whopping 95 million lbs. "Sugar ships" at the Domino terminal always stay a week or more, but due to the historic size of the shipment, the **Simon Shulte**

stayed 16 days. BISC's Mary Davission, who met a reporter from **The Baltimore Sun** on the dock while preparing to board, was interviewed for an April 10th article, "Ship Delivers Largest Sugar Cargo ever to Domino Plant." Lorraine Mirabella quoted Mary: "There was a lot of conversation about U.S. security rules and how difficult it is for them trying to go ashore now [compared to] five or six years ago....Now they need security escorts, so that's a role for us. This crew was talking about going shopping to Walmart and Best Buy and coming to the Seafarers' Center — those are pretty common requests." Just as Mary predicted to the reporter, as the **Simon Schulte's** stay unfolded, BISC volunteers visited the crew several times, placed a loaner phone on the vessel, and provided four shopping trips – business as usual for BISC, even while history was being made at the port.



The **Simon Schulte**

Around the World in One Day with BISC

We're often asked what nationalities we encounter in our ministry. Of course there's no such thing as a "typical day" in the lively world of the port, but here's what happened in just one day this past winter:

- The captain of an Indian-crewed container ship e-mailed thanking us for a full day's service provided by volunteer Capt. Suresh Ahluwalia.
- We brought Chinese newspapers and a loaner phone to a coal ship crew with no visas to go ashore.
- We brought novels and other reading matter on request to the American crew of a car carrier.
- We brought a loaner phone to a Dutch, Filipino, and Cape Verde crew, and chatted about their family news during 2 visits.
- We transported Chinese crew members from the sugar ship *Lisa J.*, and Russian crew members from a *Lo-Ro vessel* (which LOads some cargo with cranes but ROLls construction vehicles on and off the ramp).
- Finally, we transported a very mixed container ship crew from Croatia, Sri Lanka, and Montenegro!



Crewmembers of the *Lisa J.* enjoying the lounge at BISC

Some Weeks are Especially Blessed . . .

Sadly, work schedules often prevent crews from taking advantage of our Center. Much of our interaction happens on board their vessels or in our vans, and that can be very rewarding! But hosting visitors at the Center brings special rewards.

One winter week we hosted an especially rich variety of crews.

Three Filipinos from a container ship came to make phone calls, and a Russian and Greek from another used our internet. A Ukrainian from a car carrier visited another day to go online. These vessels don't have much time in port, so we were especially glad they could come in!

Crews docked at Domino Sugar stay a week or more. Though within walking distance of our Center, they cannot leave their vessels without authorized escort, and we were happy to bring in 11 Filipino crew members several times that week. On another occasion, a volunteer brought 6 visitors from a coal ship, hailing from India. And finally, an Indonesian crew member visited us several times from a vessel filled with—yum!—cocoa beans.



Highlights of that week's visits included:

- Conversations about different Bible translations;
- An extended on-line session during which a seafarer could both speak with and see his son, who was celebrating a birthday.
- And this photo (left) of crew members from the *CS Calvina*, docked at Domino Sugar.

Board welcomes new members

In Jan. 2012, the Board of the Baltimore International Seafarers' Center unanimously elected Gregory Waidlich, Operations Manager for Atlantic Container Line in Baltimore, as their newest member. BISC ship visitors, especially Director Emeritus Bro. Ed Munro and Associate Chaplain Allene Taylor, have been visiting ACL crews for nearly two decades.

Captain Michael Flanagan of the Association of Maryland Pilots, featured as a volunteer Ship Visitor in our Summer 2010 issue, had been elected previously, after the Board accepted with regrets and thanks the resignation of Captain George Miller. Welcome aboard, Greg and Mike!

BISC Staff

Director: The Rev. Mary H.T. Davisson

Associate Chaplain: Allene Taylor

Office Assistants: Tina Jordan, Rodulfo Kintanar, John Thompson, Jim Johnstone, Jackie Nagel, Tony Hollis, Jane Parker

Ship Visitors: Suresh Ahluwalia, Don Bryant, Darrell Dempster, Mike Flanagan, Bob Garske, Linda Hollis, Larry Long, Ed Munro, Dick Nagel, Lee Van Koten

St. Nicholas' Bag Newsletter:
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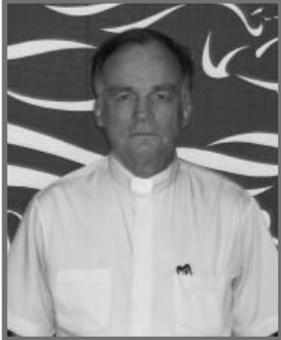
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Taking the Stance of a Learner

One way I've approached God's world is with the stance of a learner; with God's creation always evolving and constantly revealing new dimensions, I find this attitude a helpful way to interact with it and the wide variety of people dwelling in it. So in that light, what I've learned about my ministry as a new, Lutheran Chaplain in my first months in the Port of Baltimore is that it is...



The Rev. Gerry Rickel,
Lutheran Port Chaplain
in Baltimore

- **multi-cultural in the very best sense.** On any given day I can interact with Filipinos, Indians, Chinese, Russians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians, Romanians, Greeks, Koreans, Swedes, Italians -- a rainbow of cultures.
- **interfaith** as I serve Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, and people simply content to identify themselves as "my friends." My ministry truly includes "all God's people."
- **ecumenical.** I am called by a Lutheran Agency (Seafarers and International House in NYC), work with an Episcopal Director, cooperate with a multi-denominational staff, and serve seafarers who can be any denomination at all.

- **social ministry in nature** as I have assisted seafarers who have spent months at sea -- seeking repair for their computers, finding historic landmarks, helping to shop for their children and wives, purchasing washing machines for their vessels, and even helping to find a good bookstore.
- **a unique ministry of caring.** Seafarers perform a valuable service to us and live potentially lonely lives at sea, separated for months from family, friends and homeland. My visits (which at the time may seem insignificant to me) may carry an enormous impact: "Someone cares enough to visit me and ask if I need help!"
- **hospitality** to people from other countries (some visiting our country for the very first time). These visits are a unique and special gift to the people who serve us.

So what is your stance to and for the world? Prayerful? Caring? Learning? Open? Serving?...

A BISC 'Book Report'



On December 28th, the captain of a container ship asked if the Center could put together a selection of books (these are free of course), since the only literature aboard the ship was in German, and he hoped we could provide books in English for the rest of the crew. Our Treasurer, John Thompson, added to the many hats he already wears for BISC and assembled a mini-library of titles, which we delivered. The Captain later called from Savannah to John's cell phone on January 3rd to thank

him, saying that the crew was delighted with the selection, that the books had meant a great deal to the crew, and expressed his personal best wishes to everyone at the Center.



Bishops' Cup Tournament to Benefit BISC

The Bishops' Cup Charity Golf Tournament, an annual fall tradition, provides the chance for avid golfers, duffers, and beginners alike to join the Bishops of Maryland for a day of fun, fellowship, and great golf. **And proceeds from this year's tournament (date and location to be announced) will benefit the Baltimore International Seafarers' Center!** As we go to press, the tournament is in its initial planning stages, with many sponsorship opportunities remaining. Anyone interested in playing or sponsoring may talk to the Diocese's Director of Communications, Sharon Tillman, at 410-467-1399, or email stillman@episcopalmaryland.org. Please check BISC's website or facebook page for updates on the tournament. The folks at BISC hope to see you there!



Fun on the course at last year's Bishops' Cup Charity Golf Tournament. [Photo credit: Episcopal Diocese of Maryland]

A Joyous Holiday Reunion

BISC volunteer (and retired sea captain) Suresh Ahluwalia, his son Sunil Ahluwalia, and Sunil's wife Madhu Ahluwalia enjoyed a reunion with family friend Capt. Subhash Anchan of the **Maersk Varna** aboard the vessel in December. Capt. Anchan is a senior master, having been with Maersk for over 20 years; Suresh's other son Nikhil was a master with the same line.

In addition to enjoying a festive meal with Capt. Anchan, Suresh and his wife Pat Ahluwalia delivered Christmas gifts for the entire crew, and Suresh also provided transportation.



Suresh, Sunil, Capt. Anchan, and Madhu on the bridge of the **Maersk Varna**

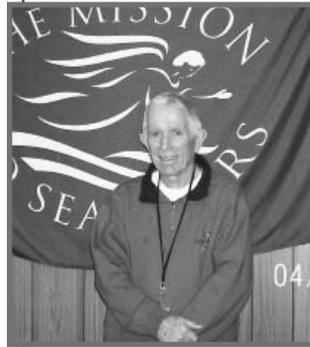
Thank You!

The Baltimore International Seafarers' Center gratefully acknowledges donations from the following in the last six months:

Mr. Bud Nixon, Ms. Mary Spilman Davisson, Ms. Allene Taylor, Ms. Brenda Kovacs, The Rev. Ellie Thober, Ms. Sidney Turner (in honor of Lee Van Koten), Ms. Mary Snead (in honor of Lee Van Koten), Dr. Anne Keifer, Capt. Chris Yearwood, Ms. Jane Clark, Ms. Diane Flayhart, Charles and Barbara Booth, Ms. Alice Bockman (in memory of Emily Davisson), Mr. Hugh Stierhoff, and the Rev. Mary Davisson.

We also appreciate two special grants (p. 7) and the support of churches and groups visited by the Director (p. 8).

BISC Welcomes Two New Volunteers



BISC volunteer Ship Visitor Larry Long

Larry Long is a member of St. James Episcopal Church in Parkton and a retired attorney. He visits crews for a full-day shift on Wednesdays. Just a couple of weeks after completing his training and beginning solo visits, Larry told us, "I really look forward to Wednesdays!"

Jane Parker is a long-time Episcopalian with extensive experience in education and editing. She brings her organizational and computer skills to the Center on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. And like Larry, after her first week or so in our office, Jane commented, "I really look forward to coming in!"



BISC volunteer Office Assistant Jane Parker

What About "Easter at Sea"?



Most of our readers are familiar with our Christmas at Sea program (p. 4). The gifts are appreciated by seafarers of all backgrounds. But many **seafarers also appreciate our ministry during other holy seasons**. During Holy Week 2012, seafarers thanked us repeatedly for the palms and rosaries we brought on board. And toward the end of the 50 days of Eastertide, a seafarer mentioned that while his vessel had been in Baltimore on Good Friday, Pastor Gerry brought him a worship DVD. The seafarer was working almost non-stop while his vessel was in port, but enjoyed watching it out at sea on Easter Monday.

Center Announces Grants

The Baltimore International Seafarers' Center gratefully acknowledges a grant of \$5,000.00 from the **Friendly Inn of Baltimore City**, to establish an assistance fund for seafarers docked in Baltimore who experience emergencies which cannot be met by other sources. For example, a seafarer injured on the job would have medical expenses covered by insurance, but might turn to us for a free cell phone and phone cards. Seafarers on a vessel with legal or financial difficulties would be visited by the Coast Guard to check on basic habitability, but again might request assistance from us to communicate with their families in this stressful situation.

We would also like to thank the **George and Ruth Babylon Foundation** for their generous gift of \$6,000.00 in support of our general assistance to seafarers. In this time of seafarers' increasing dependence on seafarers' centers for security escort and transportation, coupled with rising gasoline prices and tolls, such generous gifts are deeply appreciated.

Media Matters

BISC has been "in the news" of late – in addition to being quoted in a **Baltimore Sun** article on the Simon Schulte on April 10th (p.2), BISC Director Mary Davisson was also mentioned in relation to the M/V Capitola case (see "Helping Seafarers Help the Planet," Summer 2011) in a **New York Times** article, "With Tips From Whistle-Blowers, More Hands on Deck in Pollution Cases," by Theo Emery, on February 13th.

To top it off, Kathy Bergren Smith interviewed Mary extensively for her April 17th blog, **On the Waterfront**, on **Workboat.com**. In a piece entitled, "Foreign Mariners Stuck Aboard Ships," Mary details the impact of homeland security regulations on crews, and the role BISC plays in providing some relief. Both piece are well worth reading for anyone interested in the challenges seafarers face today.

Check out Our Website!

Thanks to Martin Reisinger, BISC's website, <http://www.baltseafarers.ang-md.org>, has been redesigned and revamped to include videos! Please check out our new "look" and tell your friends about our new, more comprehensive presence on the web.

Congratulations, Tony!



The Revs. Linda and Tony Hollis

Hearty congratulations to the Rev. Tony Hollis on his **reception of the first annual Order of Chaplain O'Grady award** for several decades of service in Thailand and the U.S. as chaplain in the U.S. Army, the U.S. Army Reserves, and the

Maryland Defense Force.

Tony, an Episcopal priest, volunteers his pastoral and organizational skills every Monday at the Seafarers' Center while his wife Linda Hollis, an Episcopal deacon, visits crews. Tony and Linda also volunteer together for the U.S.O.

*Happy to support the
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Outreach

During the last six months, Director Mary Davisson has spoken, preached, or given invocations at the following. We thank all of these for their support.

Church of the Redemption (Episcopal), the Traffic Club of Baltimore banquet honoring David Stambaugh (Baltimore Maritime Exchange), the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA) Centennial Banquet, St.



Mary giving the invocation at AAPA [photo credit: Paul Scott Abbott and AAPA]

Margaret's Annapolis (Episcopal), Christ the King Woodlawn (Episcopal), St. Thomas' Providence Road (Episcopal).

Volunteer Ship Visitor Bob Garske also addressed the Augsburg Lutheran Village Social Club.

We depend on your donations to help seafarers.

Please make out checks to:
 Baltimore International Seafarers' Center,
 1430 Wallace St., Baltimore MD 21230.

The Center is a 501(c)3, and contributions are tax-deductible.

Have a Heart!—For Family Ministry

Not everyone thinks of working with seafarers as a family ministry. But in addition to facilitating phone calls and internet contact with

their families back home (in the Philippines, India, China, Russia . . .), we also **provide security escort so that seafarers on board vessels can enjoy reunions with relatives** who have immigrated into the Baltimore area.



Valentine's Week, for example, began with Director Mary Davisson escorting 3 relatives of the captain of a bulk carrier from the terminal gate to the gangway, so they could spend the afternoon together on the ship. Mary and volunteer Lee Van Koten also provided 2 shopping trips to the crew on Monday and Tuesday.

And the week ended with volunteer and Captain (retired) Suresh Ahluwalia working many extra hours Friday and Saturday to facilitate reunions for the families of 3 different officers, and to provide transportation to several locations downtown and elsewhere.

Both occasions required many hours of calls and mails between Mary, Suresh, the ships' agents, the seafarers involved, and their relatives. **So yes, this is an intensive family ministry!**