

The Baltimore International Seafarers' Center

How the Center Got its Start



On November 17, 2011, at the Church of the Redemption, Rev. Ed Munro, the Baltimore International Seafarers' Center first Director, and Randi Donselar, the Center's first Treasurer, reminisced about the Center's start almost 20 years ago.

Ed initially thought of the need for a Center when he traveled on a cruise ship in February, 1991. He learned from conversations that many of the sailors spent months away from their families and endured fairly sparse conditions nothing like the luxurious conditions the passengers were enjoying.

To Randi it was also an eye-opener to learn about the hardships that many of the sailors endured. Many seafarers were from developing-world countries and lived less-than-glamorous day-to-day lives – they crewed for many months in harsh conditions away from their homes and families.

Ed realized that a ministry was needed to help these sailors when they came to the Port of Baltimore. At about this time he became a deacon and knew the rector at the Church of the Redemption which coincidentally is near the Port. Congregation members served as the first Board of the Seafarers' Center.

In exploring how to set up the Center, Ed realized that with its limited resources the Center could never satisfy 100% of the needs, but should help as many as it can. The Center today continues to help as many of the Port's visiting seafarers as it can. (Approximately 50,000 seafarers arrive at Baltimore each year.)

Ed illustrated ways the Center has helped sailors when they are in Port. He gave an anecdotal story about one particular case in which he helped an innocent sailor avoid being jailed unfairly. That sailor today is a ship captain, but had he been convicted he would have never been able to serve onboard any ship again.

Since its start, the Center's staff and volunteers continue to serve and make a difference in the lives of thousands of seafarers who visit the Port of Baltimore each year.

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