

Seamen's Church Institute Ministry to Mariners

Founded in 1834 and affiliated with the Episcopal Church, though nondenominational in terms of its trustees, staff and service to mariners, the Seamen's Church Institute of New York & New Jersey (SCI) is the largest, most comprehensive mariners' agency in North America. Its mission is to care for the personal, professional, and spiritual needs of mariners around the world. Annually, its chaplains visit thousands of vessels, including those on 2,200 miles of inland waterways. SCI's maritime education facilities provide navigational training to nearly 1,600 mariners each year through simulator-based facilities in Houston, TX and Paducah, KY. The Institute and its maritime attorneys are recognized as leading advocates for merchant mariners by the United States Government, including the US Congress, the US Coast Guard, and the Department of Homeland Security, as well as the United Nations, the International Maritime Organization, the International Labor Organization and maritime trade associations.

SCI Comes to Paducah, KY

In 1995, SCI board member Tom Prendergast met with Roy Clavery, CEO of Ingram Barge Lines and the subject turned to simulation training. Ingram, ACBL, and the Ohio River Company wanted to take a new, proactive approach to training. Several maritime training companies expressed an interest in providing their services to the river community; however, the inland river companies wanted a new center in the heartland, dedicated to training inland mariners. At that time, Ingram had never heard of the Seamen's Church Institute (SCI) nor did they know about SCI's simulation capability.

As a courtesy to SCI Board Member Tom Prendergast, a meeting was set up with Craig Philip, President of Ingram Barge Company. The Rev. Peter Larom, SCI's Executive Director, and Eric Larsson, SCI's Director of Maritime Education, made a day trip to Nashville in September of 1995 to propose a revolutionary idea: establishing a Center for Maritime Education run by SCI to train inland river mariners. Several subsequent meetings occurred after that initial one.

That fall, the Rev. Larom contacted the Chamber of Commerce in Paducah, KY. By sheer coincidence, a contingent from the GPEDC (Greater Paducah Economic Development Corporation) was in New York. They visited SCI's headquarters and provided SCI with contacts in Paducah. The Rev. Larom visited Paducah over the Thanksgiving weekend. After weighing several possibilities, in March of 1996, a number of industry leaders partnered with SCI and selected Paducah as the location for a new training center.

In May of that year, ten companies agreed to contract for 40 weeks of training per year for five years. SCI chose Kongsberg to provide the Simulator; and on June 11, 1997, SCI opened the Center for Maritime Education – Paducah. The new center included the St. Nicholas Chapel with a cross made by then Grace Church Rector, the Rev. Nick Jaeger, from Ohio River driftwood. The chapel is affiliated with Grace Church. Bishop Gulick was part of the dedication ceremony for the new SCI facility in Paducah.

In 1998, SCI began a new mission called *Ministry on the River*. The Institute had no funding nor ministry model to follow, and the industry was just a little wary. The Rev. Jim Wilkinson, an Episcopal priest of the Diocese of KY and former Army Chaplain, became the founding chaplain on the river. Through his efforts, along with the Rev. Peter Larom and the Rev. Jean Smith, SCI gradually gained the trust of companies and mariners alike. SCI's holiday gift-giving programs *Christmas on the River* and *Easter on the River* followed. Beginning with short introductory visits on boats, chaplain's visits became progressively longer as mariners came to enjoy caring conversations with the chaplains. Currently, SCI has chaplains based in Louisville and New Orleans and is searching for a new chaplain to be based in Paducah. The Rev. David Rider is the Executive Director of SCI.

To learn more about the work of Seamen's Church Institute, please visit www.seamenschurch.org

**The Seamen's Church Institute
and
The Rev. David Rider, Executive Director**

Cordially Invite

The 182nd Convention of the Diocese of KY

to a

Wine and Cheese Reception

at the

**Center for Maritime Education
111 Kentucky Avenue, Paducah, KY**

**6:45 – 7:30 pm
Friday, February 26**

The River Pilot Simulators Will Be Open