



THE
SEAMEN'S
CHURCH
INSTITUTE

THE KNIT

before Christmas

Summer 2022



THE KNIT *before Christmas*

The Knit Before Christmas is a publication of the Seamen's Church Institute.

Summer 2022

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NEW: USING QR CODES

Throughout this magazine, you will see these square markings. These are Quick Response codes, or QR codes. Please turn your smartphone camera on and point it at these squares. The camera app will scan the code and ask if you want to visit the corresponding website. Try it here. If you wish to subscribe to our monthly e-newsletter, The Masthead, scan this code, or you can visit seamenschurch.org/subscribe.



From the PRESIDENT'S DESK

Receiving a “Summer” issue of *The Knit Before Christmas* may strike many as ironic—the combining of summer and Christmas—given that Christmas in the northern hemisphere is a winter holiday. Yet, one of my favorite concepts is the “Christmas in Summer” initiative where civic and volunteer organizations, especially churches, reach out to assist those in need with an unexpected gift, home repair, or recreational outing. Christmas in Summer dates to the 19th century, and during World War II it became a way to ensure that Christmas presents reached service personnel around the world in time for the Christmas holiday by mailing the gifts in the height of summer.

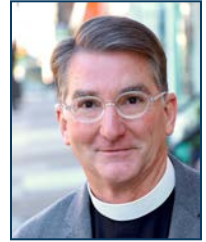
The Seamen’s Church Institute’s Christmas at Sea program dates to another war—the Spanish American War—when, in 1898, volunteers aligned with SCI began distributing knits to sailors and merchant mariners. And more than a hundred years later, Christmas at Sea is going strong, with 20,000-plus handmade items delivered during last year’s Christmas at Sea effort. Obviously, producing this incredible number of gifts is a year-round effort, which means that our many volunteers are

knitting, crocheting, and sewing in the heat of summer to ensure that we have the gifts ready in time for the holiday season. If you are a Christmas at Sea volunteer, know that your creations are amongst the most beloved and memorable gifts received by the mariners we serve.

I do hope you enjoy this issue of *the Knit Before Christmas* and I encourage you to join *Untangled*, our Christmas at Sea Facebook group (see page 9), or subscribe to our monthly *Masthead* newsletter, or follow the SCI Facebook page, to stay current on the many ways SCI improves the lives of mariners around the globe.

Thank you for all you do, and for all you have given. Christmas at Sea and SCI could not survive without your generosity. More than ever, mariners depend on SCI, and SCI depends on you.

Faithfully,



MARK NESTLEHUTT
SCI President &
Executive Director

KNIT NOTES

A Message from Joanne Bartosik, Senior Manager, Development and Christmas at Sea

This December will mark my fifth Christmas at Sea. I vividly remember my first day in the role because it coincided with Chaplain Michelle’s birthday. The Director of SCI’s Finance and Operations, Leslie O’Neal, organized a staff lunch at a Portuguese restaurant in the Ironbound neighborhood of Newark. En masse, we rode together in a passenger van, which Chaplain Cora impressively maneuvered into a small parking space. I was struck by the camaraderie and *esprit de corps* among my new colleagues, and I sensed I had just become a part of something very special.

This initial impression was and continues to be spot on. SCI’s Christmas at Sea is very special. Its status as the oldest and largest volunteer knitting and crocheting program in the United States is supported by the ongoing generosity of fiber artists and sparked by a new generation of volunteers. Every year, the international seafarers and inland river mariners who receive our handmade items often express how meaningful the gifts are, especially those who are away from home for their first Christmas. I also hear from graduates of maritime academies, thrilled to receive their first CAS gift after participating in a packing event as a student. I once received a telephone call

from a mariner’s wife looking to replace a beloved hat that finally disintegrated after years of wear—that’s a treasured memory. And I will always remember a sweet email from a captain hoping no one would object if he gave his daughter his scarf as it was in the perfect Baylor Bears colors.

It takes a sprinkle of holiday magic to make this all happen, and we have you to thank for that. So, whether you knit, crochet, sew, donate toiletries or left-over Halloween candy, participate in a packing event, personalize Christmas cards, or tell friends and family members about us, it all contributes to the joy of the season and brightens the lives of the seafarers and mariners we serve.

With gratitude,



JOANNE BARTOSIK

Joanne is wearing a scarf made by Sandra in New York, and a Hat sent in from a donor in Hawaii.



From Doreen in Indiana
Safe travels!

From Doreen in Indiana
Safe travels!

From Doreen in Indiana
Safe travels!

From Doreen in Indiana
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Stepping into
another season of

Christmas at Sea

“Every off-season you look at what you can improve on. So you come in for the new season fresh and ready to go again.”

~ Mason Mount, English professional soccer player

by Joanne Bartosik

Senior Manager, Development and Christmas at Sea

And here we are—ready to go again. The success and longevity of Christmas at Sea (CAS) are thanks to the dedication and commitment of more than 1,000 volunteers from all fifty U.S. states, Washington D.C., Europe, and Canada. Every stitch of every garment we unpack in Port Newark, New Jersey, contains love and care. Just as it is vital to us that all donations are acknowledged, it is equally important that gifts are given to those for whom they are intended—mariners. Preparing for another season of CAS, I thought it would be helpful to review some of the program’s parameters and address frequently asked questions so that the donations we receive are sea and river ready.

What do we need more of?

The number one question I am asked is a variation of “**what do you need more of?**” I like to answer that question this way. Knitting and crocheting for CAS should be fun. We want you to work with the pattern or patterns you enjoy making the most. If hats are your thing, please make hats. If you prefer making scarves or any other patterns, please do. Miraculously, it all balances out.

Sets (hats, scarves, or cowls)?

Questions about sets (hats & scarves or cowls) are a close second. In Port Newark, we give international seafarers two knits/crochets: either a hat and scarf or a hat and cowl set. Depending upon resources, we also pair vests with socks or slippers. Seafarers are away from home, on average, for nine months a year. Their needs differ from river mariners, who work a 28-days on, 28-days off schedule. Thus, river mariners receive one knit/crochet.

We do not separate sets. Sets are packed in ditty bags for seafarers calling on the Port of New York and New Jersey. Single pieces are gifted to river mariners working on U.S. inland waterways. Depending upon supply and demand, we will match hats with scarves and/or cowls in Port Newark if needed.

 Hats and scarves by Dorie B. in Indiana, a longtime CAS Volunteer.

Gift tags?

I often receive inquiries about gift tags. It is not a requirement to affix gift tags to your knits and crochets; we will attach one to each garment or set if it does not already have one. (Except for ditty bags; we do not tag ditty bags.) However, it is very useful and appreciated when donations arrive already tagged. It saves staff and volunteers’ time, especially during the busy season.

We are happy to mail gift tags to you. You can request them by emailing CAS@seamenschurch.org or telephoning the office at 973.589.5828. For your convenience, gift tags are also available to download and print directly from our website's patterns and publications page—seamenschurch.org/patterns. As an alternative, feel free to make your own! We have seen some impressive and creative tags using postcards, photographs, and drawings. Please do not use safety pins, as they tend to open; it is preferable to attach tags with yarn. We would also like to remind everyone to be cautious about sharing too much personal information. Your first name, the initial of your last name, and the state in which you reside strike just the right balance, as mariners enjoy knowing where their gift originated. For groups, it is fine to add city and state. We will edit personalized, individual gift tags and Christmas cards containing street and email addresses and/or telephone numbers, but do not forget to include your contact information inside your package so we know whom to thank and where to send our acknowledgment.

Colors and fibers?

Fiber artists often have questions about color and fiber. We encourage you to use yarn on hand; wool, wool blend, acrylic—it is all acceptable. We suggest avoiding specialty yarns like angora or alpaca, but we rarely see these more delicate fibers. The most important thing to keep in mind about yarn is the weight. Our patterns work best with worsted weight yarn. Garments that are too thick are problematic. CAS hats are designed to fit under hard hats, and scarves and cowls tuck snugly into safety vests. In line with the ethos of Christmas at Sea from the very beginning, we only accept handmade knits and crochets. We do not accept store-bought garments.

Continued on next page...

Have fun with color! You are not limited to navy blue, black, brown, gray, etc. Shades of white and pastels will show dirt and grime more easily, but we accept them. You might wish to consider using lighter shades as accents. During the early stages of COVID, we received the most interesting patterns, using bits and strands of left-over yarn. We affectionately refer to these unique pieces as our COVID-19 collection.

What about patterns?

You do not have to follow our patterns exactly. We do not wish to deter you from adding your creative touches; however, please follow the essence of our patterns, by which I mean capture the overall look of the piece. Garments should adhere to our dimensions—not longer, wider, thicker, or thinner than indicated in the pattern. There will of course be some deviation among knitters and crocheters, depending upon how tight you make your stitches. Still, these designs have been carefully developed to complement the safety gear worn on board vessels. Knits and crochets distributed under The Seamen’s Church Institute’s (SCI) CAS program have a distinct and consistent look. If unsure whether your item(s) will work for CAS, feel free to send in a prototype or email a photograph.

Donations?

We accept donations all year long. There is no such thing as missing a deadline! We seamlessly go from one Christmas into the next. Over the summer, we begin moving knits and crochets west for inland mariners, and by the end of August, our calendar of packing events begins to fill up.

You do not have to knit, crochet, or sew to participate in CAS. We rely on donations of travel-size toiletries, non-perishable treats, and personalized Christmas cards to include in ditty bags. We depend on individual volunteers and groups to help prepare everything for delivery. And we welcome financial contributions that help keep our services running.

We appreciate all gifts. The more garments we receive, the more mariners we can reach. For 124 years, SCI has been gifting knits/crochets to mariners at Christmastime. It is our time-honored tradition of thanking men and women in the maritime industry for all they do to make our modern way of life possible. None of this could happen without your support, and we are deeply grateful.

Scan here to learn more about SCI’s Christmas at Sea or visit seamenschurch.org/cas.



Nice KNITS & CROCHETS!

Recently, a few of our International Seafarers’ Center colleagues modeled some of the hundreds of beautiful handmade knits and crochets sent in by our incredible and talented donors.



(1) Chaplain Cora is wearing a hat created by Dorothy in Florida, and a cowl made by Pat in Pennsylvania.



(2) Chaplain James is wearing a hat made by Beth in Indiana and a scarf made by Diane in Wisconsin.



3



4

(3) International Seafarers' Center Director Tim Wong is wearing a vest given by a Secret Santa, and a hat and scarf made by members of the St. John's Episcopal Church in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.

(4) Operations Associate and ISC Driver Aileen is wearing a hat sent in by Glenda in Texas, and a scarf by Lois in Iowa.

(5) Chaplain Michelle is wearing a hat created by Donna in Pennsylvania and scarf created by Knit us Together of Pennsylvania.



5



6

(6) Receptionist Gina is wearing a scarf created by Pat in Arizona and a hat created by a donor from Hawaii.



7

(7) Susan (left), SCI's Senior Manager of Institutional Giving, is wearing a scarf by Lois W., from Iowa, and a hat by Verna D. in Massachusetts. Suzanne (right), our Senior Manager of Individual Giving, is wearing a hat and scarf by Sally B. from Alabama.



8

(8) SCI's Communications Director Evan is wearing a hat made by Albert in Maine.



9

(9) Chaplain Cora is wearing a hat and scarf made by Cindy from Ohio; Chaplain James is wearing a hat and scarf created by Nancy in Missouri; and Chaplain Michelle is wearing a hat made by Jean in Connecticut and a scarf made by Knit Us Together of Pennsylvania.

Meet Linda Baumann

Linda Baumann is one of our volunteer knitters who has been creating handmade garments for Christmas at Sea for more than ten years. We enjoyed speaking with her recently about what inspires her to knit for SCI and how she sees our mission.

Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I grew up in New Jersey and graduated from Ithaca College; after graduation I was a physical education teacher until I had children. Then I was a mom! When my children went off to college, I started and ran a newspaper for our hometown, The Montgomery News.

When did you first become interested in knitting and quilting?

My mother and grandmother taught me to sew and knit when I was very young. I made my own clothes, and made many of my children's clothes and sweaters when they were little. I have a Sailrite sewing machine and I also make cushions and covers for our boat.

I began quilting about 20 years ago and have made many quilts as gifts for family and friends. Now I mainly make quilts for charity, such as Quilts for Kids. I attended a quilt convention and visited the National Quilt Museum in Paducah, Kentucky, in 2018, where I saw SCI's Center for Maritime Education on one of our walks around the town.

When did you first hear about Christmas at Sea, and what drew you to participate?

I heard of Christmas at Sea through my church in New Jersey over ten years ago, and began knitting hats and scarves in the evenings with wool that I had left over from other projects.

Do you or your family have any connection to the maritime industry?

Although we don't have any connection to the maritime industry, we have been boating for over 25 years. My husband is an avid recreational fisherman and has a fishing boat at our home in Ocean City, New Jersey, and another at our home in North Palm Beach, Florida.

I took my efforts to a new level to knit for Christmas at Sea when we bought our cruising boat, *Knot R Problem* in 2017. My husband, son, and I picked up the Grand Banks Classic in Kemah, Texas, in December of 2017 to run it back to our home in North Palm Beach, FL. We spent a cold Christmas on the boat in Houma, Louisiana, and on our trip saw many tugs and barges with their crews outside in the cold, wind, and rain. We were in Biloxi, Mississippi, waylaid with a broken shaft seal over New Year's weekend. It was 17 degrees and the water pipes were freezing in the marina. Even though we grew up in New Jersey and had lived through many cold winters, it gave us a new appreciation of being on the water in that kind of weather! That's when I decided to redouble my knitting efforts, and

vowed to knit the amount of hats and cowls that I had donated over the past five years (62) for SCI during the next year.

I reached my goal by my 70th birthday in September, and during a gathering of my friends, they all encouraged me to knit a few more and reach 70 items for 2018. Then in 2020 it was my husband's and my 50th wedding anniversary so I got busy and knit 50 hats, 50 cowls, and made 50 ditty bags. Since I'm a quilter as well, the ditty bags were a must to include with my shipment!

It's fun to have a goal, and since we were on our boat for almost two months traveling up and back between our homes in Florida and New Jersey, I had lots of time to knit that year.

Are you familiar with the Seamen's Church Institute's mission? How would you describe our mission to others?

I tell others that the Institute provides support and education to mariners who are away from their homes for months at a time. It also provides spiritual guidance, as well as supplies and handmade gifts through the Christmas at Sea program. One of my quilting friends in Florida actually worked across from the Seamen's Church Institute in New York over 50 years ago, and remembers the seafarers coming in during the holiday season when they were in port.

What inspires you to give to SCI?

I feel very fortunate to have the time and the means to donate to others. My husband and I carefully research charities that we feel do the most good, and the Seamen's Church Institute is one that we feel serves the needs of mariners whose role is so often overlooked as they spend months on the water, away from their families, while supporting our economy and way of life.

Finally, do you have a favorite Christmas at Sea pattern?

Although I love "Anchors Aweigh," I knit mostly "Oliver's Cap and Cowl" because I can knit one a day while I'm aboard *Knot R Problem*! We've traveled more than 6000 miles on our boat, on the Intercoastal Waterway through the Gulf and from Florida to New Jersey and back, and I enjoy knitting while I'm navigating!



"Knot Our Problem"

Introducing

Amy Mugavero

Director of Development



Amy is wearing a Hat & Scarf made by Verna from Massachusetts.

In 2021, SCI welcomed Amy Mugavero as Director of Development. With an extensive background in fundraising and development, Amy joins the senior administrative staff after having spent more than two decades in a variety of professional development settings, most recently, the Queens Public Library Foundation, New York City Ballet, New York Philharmonic, and the YMCA of Greater New York.

The Development department is responsible for acquiring the funding necessary to support the mission and vision of the organization. This is accomplished by identifying, educating, cultivating, and engaging donors. Amy brings a fresh perspective to the department. She is guiding the efforts to expand and diversify fundraising, focusing on individual giving, institutional giving, special events, annual appeals, capital campaigns, endowments, and planned gifts.

A graduate of The Julliard School in violin performance, Amy is an active solo and chamber music professional, as well as a member of the Women’s Forum of New York, a network of women leaders representing the highest levels of professional achievement.

LEAVE A LEGACY

The Janet Lord Roper 1898 Legacy Society

Named in memory of Janet Lord Roper, SCI’s “House Mother” from 1915 to 1943, the Roper Legacy Society acknowledges the generosity and foresight of individuals who include the Seamen’s Church Institute in their estate plans as an important philanthropic commitment to furthering SCI’s mission.



In 2018, to commemorate the 120th anniversary of Christmas at Sea (CAS), SCI established the 1898 Society. CAS volunteers who include SCI in their estate plans are recognized in the 1898 Society and the Roper Society.

Through planned gifts, these thoughtful society members create a tradition that sustains SCI’s important work, enabling us to continue meeting the immediate needs of mariners

Christmas at Sea

AMAZON WISH LIST

Many of the goods mariners bring to our shores are the very items they have difficulty obtaining for themselves. For your convenience, you can purchase travel-sized toiletries and nonperishable treats online and have them shipped directly to CAS in time for packing.

Scan for our suggested shopping list or visit: bit.ly/ChristmasAtSeaWishList



Untangled is fast approaching 500 members. Launched in April 2021, *Untangled* is Christmas at Sea’s members-only Facebook group. It is a warm and welcoming community of knitters, crocheters, and ditty bag makers, all connected by their support of the Seamen’s Church Institute. Whether you are new to the program or have been a long-time participant, *Untangled* is the place to view photographs of finished projects; find answers to your most challenging questions; pick up interesting tidbits about colors, fibers, and materials; and meet and mingle virtually with Christmas at Sea volunteers from around the world. *Untangled* is informative, entertaining, and easy to join.

Scan this code to join *Untangled*, or visit facebook.com/groups/untangled.sci



through pastoral care, maritime education and training, and advocacy.

There are a variety of ways to make a planned gift, including naming SCI as a beneficiary of your estate, retirement plan, or life insurance policy, or by setting up a charitable remainder or charitable lead trust.

For information on how you can make a difference, contact Amy Mugavero, Director of Development, at 212.349.9090 or email: amugavero@seamenschurch.org

Chaplaincy: the heart of SCI

The heart of the Seamen’s Church Institute is its chaplaincy. In the Port of New York and New Jersey, the largest port on North America’s East Coast, chaplains and support personnel provide pastoral care via ship visits, transportation services, and extended hospitality at our International Seafarers’ Center. In America’s heartland, SCI is on call 24/7 to respond to the urgent needs of mariners along the nation’s inland waterways and river systems with a corps of highly skilled chaplains, trained in critical incident stress management and suicide intervention. SCI’s quarterly Pastoral Activity Report allows us to share their stories from the field, providing insight into what they do and what it means to them and the mariners they serve.

Here is an excerpt from SCI’s May 2022 report, bringing to light the challenges of providing pastoral care to Ukrainian seafarers.

From Yugoslavia to Ukraine

Chaplain Michelle McWilliams

While having my temperature scanned on the deck of a container vessel, I heard a booming voice calling my name. I turned to see a man poking his head out of a porthole. I exchanged pleasantries, and he said, “you don’t remember me, do you?” After he pulled down his mask and mentioned hunting with his son, I remembered. I recalled he lived in Ukraine but was originally from Croatia. I responded, “Yes, chief, I remember. How are you holding up, and how are your loved ones?” Tears started to form in his eyes. His words carried intense emotion as he spoke about the strength of the Ukrainian people, his anguish about the war, and his frustration with his wife’s stubbornness. Željko was still processing why his wife did not heed his warning and leave

Ukraine. Now she had no choice but to stay with heavy bombing occurring in their hometown. Like many seafarers, he feels powerless.

The chief apologized for sounding angry about his wife’s decision, but to me, it seemed that his worry and guilt were manifested as blame because his reaction was the only thing he could control. And, being a chief officer, he felt he had to be strong for the other Ukrainians on the ship. As he was pulled away for work duties, he expressed gratitude and thanked me for letting him share.



Chaplain Michelle McWilliams

I recently saw him again. He informed me that his wife made the long journey west and was now in a safer area of Kyiv. The plan was for his wife to continue 1,000 km (just over 600 miles) to the Hungarian border, where she would meet one of Željko’s friends.

This is Željko’s second war—he was a soldier in Yugoslavia. He shared his insights. There was always quiet after destruction. Innocent lives are taken. He described the lack of humanity and how hard it is to endure the loss. I compared our conversation to being on a roller coaster, with extreme highs and lows.

I have had no experience serving a seafaring population facing the horrors of war. As we finished our conversation, the chief again expressed his gratitude to me for listening and being there when he needed someone to talk to. This ministry can be challenging, and sometimes I get worried about saying or doing the right thing. But, in my interactions with Željko, I am reminded that listening, being present, and providing support to seafarers is paramount.

SUPPORT SCI

The World Depends on Mariners.
Mariners Depend on SCI.
SCI Depends on You.

Founded in 1834, the Seamen’s Church Institute promotes the safety, dignity, and improved working environment for the men and women serving in North American and international maritime communities through pastoral care, training, advocacy, and thought leadership. When you contribute to SCI, you provide the vital support that allows us to respond to mariner needs without hesitation. Your gift makes a difference. Scan the QR code above to make an online donation. Or follow seamenschurch.org/giving to learn more.



Christmas at Sea

on the U.S. Inland Waterways

Each year, Christmas at Sea distributes thousands of handmade garments to mariners working on U.S. inland waterways. We do this through our team of SCI chaplains and chaplain associates, as well as many volunteers—adults and children alike—who lend a hand with packing, and decorating cards and delivery boxes. It is an inspirational sight to see people of all ages coming together under the Christmas at Sea banner to give back to mariners.

Various churches partner with us to help make it all possible. Ingleside United Methodist Church (pictured at right) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, is one such partner, storing our knits and supporting CAS by holding packing days. Here you can get an insight into their operation—an impressive feat of organization! And this is just one of the many locations that give time and service to CAS each packing season. Each and every helping hand is valued and appreciated.

Pictures

(1) Just one team of many working hard to get things ship-shape. (2) CAS boxes decorated, packed, and ready to be distributed to towing companies.



Use GIVE BACK BOX and send your Christmas at Sea items for less

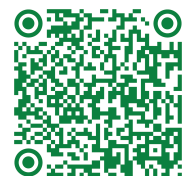
Christmas at Sea is now one of the designated charities with Give Back Box® (GBB), a nonprofit organization that supports other nonprofits by providing low-cost, prepaid shipping labels. With GBB you can ship your CAS donations from any state within the U.S., as well as Canada and the U.K., for a fixed rate, making the process simple and cheaper than it might otherwise be.

You can use any corrugated box for your donation. GBB's motto is "no box left behind." You are helping the environment by recycling corrugated boxes.

The cost of a UPS shipping label from GBB is \$15.00. Some restrictions apply. The maximum weight for a package is 70 pounds. The combined length and girth of a box (the length of its longest side plus the distance around its thickest part) may not exceed 108 inches.

You can drop off your donation at the nearest UPS site or leave it in the mail room of your building for UPS to pick up the next time they make a delivery. You can search here: [ups.com/dropoff](https://www.ups.com/dropoff) for a convenient UPS location. If you are

sending more than one package, you will need a separate label for each. Simply scan this QR code or visit seamenschurch.org/gbb, then click on our logo to add a \$15.00 shipping label to your shopping cart, and then check out using: Shop Pay, Amazon Pay, Google Pay, Facebook Pay, or PayPal.



Clicking on PayPal gives you the option of using any one of these major credit cards: Mastercard, Visa, Discover, American Express, Diners Club.

Upon purchasing a shipping label, you will be able to print it immediately, or if you do not have access to a printer, you can request that GBB mail your label to you.

Please remember to include your contact information inside the box, as it will not print as a return address on the label. We want to make sure we know who to thank!



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online



The World Depends on Mariners.
Mariners Depend on SCI.
SCI Depends on You.

OUR MISSION

The Seamen's Church Institute advocates for the personal, professional, and spiritual well-being of merchant mariners around the world. Through our Center for Maritime Education, Center for Mariner Advocacy, Port Newark International Seafarers' Center, and Ministry on the River, SCI promotes safety, dignity, and improved working and living conditions for the men and women serving in the maritime workplace. 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 is the largest, most comprehensive mariners' service agency in North America.

