A Service of Thanks

For the

Houston International
Howard T. Tellepsen
Seafarers’ Center Building
1973-2017

February 21, 2017

5:30 p.m.

In the chapel of the Seafarers’ Center
9250 High Level Road, Houston, Texas
Introduction
We gather today to give thanks for the many years of welcome seen in this building. Though other ceremonies will no doubt take place in the coming months, we are here as friends and partners in seafarers’ welfare from across the Gulf Coast, North America, and the world. In particular, it is a good occasion for the North American Maritime Ministry Association to remember the significant contribution of the chaplains and staff of the Houston International Seafarers’ Center to the general cause of seafarers’ welfare. We pray for their staff, chaplains, ship visitors, volunteers, and supporting community as they will soon take up residence in their new building – may the Lord bless them and their work.

Silent meditation

Welcome: Psalm 46: 10
Our Lord says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

Invocation: Psalm 105: 1-9
Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always. Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced, you his servants, the descendants of Abraham, his chosen ones, the children of Jacob. He is the Lord our God; his judgments are in all the earth. He remembers his covenant forever, the promise he made, for a thousand generations, the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac.
Prayers of Thanksgiving
In one or two sentences, thank God for his blessings on all our ministries, but especially on the work of the Houston International Seafarers’ Center.

Hymn: “They’ll Know We Are Christians”
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord. We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord. And we pray that all unity may one day be restored. And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love, yes they’ll know we are Christians by our love.
We will work with each other; we will work side by side. We will work with each other; we will work side by side. And we’ll guard each one’s dignity and save each one’s pride. And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love, yes they’ll know we are Christians by our love.
We will walk with each other; we will walk hand in hand. We will walk with each other; we will walk hand in hand. And together we’ll spread the news that God is in our land. And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love, yes they’ll know we are Christians by our love.

Reading: Philippians 4: 4-9
Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have
learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

**Reading: Colossians 4:2-6**

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

**Directed Prayers**

Let us pray for seafarers and their families.
Let us pray for our co-laborers in the ministry, especially the volunteers who give our their time.
Let us pray for those that work beside us in the maritime community.
Let us pray for our families.
Let us pray for the students in the chaplain training program and those who are teaching and coordinating the studies.

**Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:31-40**

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty
and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

Meditation: “The Earth is the Lord’s”

Prayer
Leader: O God, we ask you to take all those who sail in ships into your care and protection. Make them alert and wise in their duties. Make them faithful in the time of routine, prompt to decide, and courageous to act in any time of crisis. Protect them from the dangers and perils of the sea. And even in the storm, grant that there may be peace and calm within their hearts.

People: When they are far from home, far from loved ones, and far from the country which they know, help them to be sure that wherever they are, they can never be beyond your love and care. When they must part from loved ones, bring them together in safety and happiness again at the end of their labor. This we ask for your love’s sake. Amen.
Leader: Be present with us, O merciful God, and protect us all through the hours of this night, so that all who are wearied by the changes and chances of this fleeting world may rest upon your eternal changelessness through Jesus Christ our Lord. God Himself is with us. No matter where we may go on land, sea or air, help us to always remember that there is nowhere where we lack your presence, O God.

People: Help us to be conscious of your presence through your Holy Spirit and from your Holy Word.

Hymn: “Eternal Father, Strong to Save”
Eternal Father, strong to save, Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who bidd’st the mighty ocean deep Its own appointed limits keep;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee, For those in peril on the sea!

Lord, stand beside the men who sail Our merchant ships in storm and gale
In peace and war their watch they keep On every sea, on thy vast deep.
Be with them Lord, by night and day For Merchant Mariners we pray.

O Trinity of love and power! Our brethren shield in danger’s hour;
From rock and tempest, fire and foe, Protect them wheresoe’er they go;
Thus evermore shall rise to Thee Glad hymns of praise from land and sea.
Blessing
Leader:  Protect us, O Lord, as we leave this gathering and be with us at all times.
People:  For it is the Lord who makes us to dwell in safety.

Leader:  May Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you all.  Amen.

Postlude
History of the Houston International Seafarers’ Center

In 1963, a Belgian sea captain who immigrated to the U.S. had a dream of a place for seamen to go in the Port of Houston. He had sailed to this port many times and had found that it had not received the name of “Worst port in the world” for seamen without reason. He dreamed of a great seamen center and sold this dream to several others involved in shipping in one way or another. The result was the formation of the Houston International Seaman Center Inc. This body functioned in a semi-dormant state for some five years.

In 1968 three ministers (Rev. Taft Lyon, Presbyterian; Rev. Sam Duree, United Methodist; & Rev. Rivers Patout, Roman Catholic) who were working together in an ecumenical venture, caught a vision of the need of the seamen. They asked around and found that there had been several fruitless efforts to start a center for seamen, but nothing lasting had resulted. They heard about this secular group that included many well-known Houston names such as Howard Tellepsen and Jane Blaffer Owen and contacted them. This was the beginning of a unique coalition that was to bring to existence a “one of a kind” service to the seafarers that came to the Port of Houston.

This nucleus of three ministers formed a committee known as the “Committee on Ministry to International Seamen, Port of Houston.” From these three men with a dream, a ministry formed that at one time included many others to this day.