Hampurin Merimieskirkon 125-vuotisjuhla 12.9.2026
Kanslianeuvos Arto Mäenmaa

Meine Damen und Herren,
Arvoisa juhlayleisö,
Dear distinguished guests,

It is a great honour to be here with you today. I am delighted to bring you greetings from the Jenny and Antti Wihuri Foundation for this special occasion.

Wihuri Foundation is an independent Finnish foundation working for the public good. Every year, we support hundreds of projects and individuals in the fields of science, the arts, and society.

The history of our Foundation is very closely connected to the sea. For this reason, supporting the work of the Finnish Seamen's Church has been both natural and important to us ever since the Foundation was established.

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Maritime Counselor Antti Wihuri was born in 1883 in the Finnish archipelago. His connection with the sea began early: at the age of twelve, he went to sea for the first time as a cabin boy.

Over the following years, he gained a deep understanding of life at sea and eventually qualified as a sea captain. After many years as a seafarer, he founded his own shipping company in 1916 and later expanded successfully into trade and industry.

But for Antti Wihuri and his wife Jenny, success and wealth were never ends in themselves. They believed that the resources they had built should also benefit Finnish society. In 1942, they established the foundation that bears their names, with the aim of promoting "the spiritual and economic development of Finland".

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Today, a large part of our support goes to scientific research and the arts. At the same time, supporting civic social activity remains an important part of our mission. This can take many forms: youth work, voluntary national defence, cultural activities, or promoting entrepreneurial skills, for example.

The work of the Finnish Seamen's Church is an excellent example of this kind of active and vibrant civil society. Since its earliest days, its mission has been to support seafarers and Finns living and travelling around the world.

Having spent so many years at sea himself, Antti Wihuri understood better than most how important both practical and spiritual support can be for people working far from home.

It is therefore no surprise that the Foundation's support for the Finnish Seamen's Church goes back to Antti Wihuri's own time. Among early contributions were support for the construction of Finnish Seamen's Churches in London and here in Hamburg, as well as educational activities for seafarers.

That support has continued to this day and remains an important part of our relationship with the Finnish Seamen's Church. Alongside our ongoing support, we have also been pleased to contribute to

special projects – most recently, the 150th anniversary exhibition of the Finnish Seamen's Church, organised in cooperation with Finnish maritime museums in 2025.

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Today, as the Finnish Seamen's Church in Hamburg celebrates its 125th anniversary, it continues to be much more than a church. It is a social and cultural meeting place, bringing people together and offering support to Finns living and travelling abroad, as well as to others with a connection to Finland. Whether helping people settle into a new country, find a community, maintain the Finnish language, or simply feel a sense of belonging, its work can make a real difference.

Since the beginning of 2025, the Finnish Seamen's Church has also taken on a broader role in supporting the Church of Finland's work among Finns living abroad. Creating this new network is a great example of cooperation and adapting to the changing needs of society.

On behalf of Jenny and Antti Wihuri Foundation, I would like to warmly congratulate the Finnish Seamen's Church in Hamburg and wish its valuable work every success in the years ahead.

Dear Guests, Arvoisa juhlaväki,

I wish you a wonderful celebration. Toivotan teille kaikille hauskaa juhlailtaa.

Thank you. Kiitos.