

St. Stephen's News

St. Stephen's Traditional Episcopal Church, Timonium, Maryland

Vol. XX, Number 3

Edited by Anne Hawkins

January 27th, 2009

FROM THE RECTOR

Rationalizing away the 'Miracle on the Hudson'

BY CURIOUS coincidence, in the very week *St. Stephen's News* remarked on our human reluctance to recognize miracles even when they happen right in front of our noses, a spectacular miracle took place before the eyes of the entire world.

Don't just take my word for it. It was hailed as such by the news media. "Miracle on the Hudson" blared the newspaper headlines. And such sentiments were echoed by television and radio anchors and reporters not just in this country but all over the world

Indeed, how else can one describe an event in which the pilot of a crippled jet airliner with 155 people aboard – and with both engines shut down – landed safely on the Hudson River.

Landings on water are extremely dangerous. Water is a very hard substance – ask any one who has done a "belly flop" at a swimming pool. In almost every instance of a water landing, the fuselage disintegrates on impact. In the rare event, they do not disintegrate, the fuselage is so badly ruptured it sinks immediately.

Only one way to describe it

Last week's landing on the Hudson is said to be the only instance on record of a modern passenger jet landing on water with its fuselage intact and with everybody aboard surviving the impact.

It is, thus, hardly surprising that the first reaction of almost everybody involved – including New York's news hounds and politicians – was to hail the event as a miracle. And a miracle is the only way to describe it.

■ It was a miracle that the exploding engines did not ignite the aviation spirit and destroy the aircraft in flight.

■ It was a miracle that the aircraft was high enough in the air to miss the George Washington Bridge and allow the pilot to make his approach down the Hudson.

■ It was a miracle that the engines appear to have fallen off prior to impact – for the drag they would have exerted as they went into the water could have torn off the wings.

■ It was a miracle that the pilot was able to put down the plane in the fast-flowing Hudson close to the Battery Park Ferry Terminal, where there was a fleet of boats to rescue the passengers and crew.

Absent any of these (among many other) factors, the outcome might have entirely, and tragically, differed.

Small wonder, then, the headlines that immediately followed the incident.

Just a matter of training

However, as I pointed out last week, human beings have always been exceedingly uncomfortable with the notion that God can intervene directly in their affairs. Therefore it came as no surprise that within a few days of the initial rejoicing we were being told there was really nothing in the least bit miraculous about the event.

Nor, we also learned, could it be attributed to luck – doubtless because we also find the idea of vast cosmic games of chance as discomfiting as the miraculous.

News stories such as the following appeared: "For those who fly commercial jets for a living, what's quickly

become known as 'the miracle on the Hudson' wasn't simply luck after all.

"Bill Fisher, an American Airlines pilot who flies out of Chicago's O'Hare airport, said there was more than fate at work when U.S. Airways flight 1549 ditched in the icy waters of New York's Hudson River. Fisher says it starts with training . . ."

Training – so that explains it all . . . or does it?

The safe landing of Flight 1549 came about as a consequence of a uniquely complex set of circumstances – the experience and skill of the pilot being just one of the them.

Certainly, Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger II, the U.S. Airways pilot, who landed the jet in the Hudson, was a highly-trained aviator. Not only is he a veteran airline pilot, he is former Air Force fighter pilot and a certified glider instructor.

Angelic hosts not needed

Doubtless, all this extraordinary training contributed to the amazingly safe landing. Actually, some might argue that it was something of a miracle that of all the pilots working for U.S. Airways it was Captain Sullenberger who was flying this particular aircraft at this particular time. But this was not the only factor in the "miraculous" landing,

To be counted a miracle, it is not necessary that a host of angels swooped down from heaven to bear the plane up in their wings. Nor is it necessary that the Prophet Elijah or even our Lord, himself, should have been physically present in Battery Park bidding a miracle to happen.

As William of Ockham, the 14th Century English logician, declared, God works in the most economical way available. This concept lies at the heart of the principle known as "Ockham's Razor."

The Old Testament provides some useful examples of this principle in practice. Some of the most spectacular miracles were simply the result of natural phenomena – the parting of the Red Sea by the wind, the collapse of the walls of Jericho by an earthquake. The miraculous aspect of these events was the timing.

Same goes for the the "Miracle on the Hudson." It was a miraculous coming together of a unique and complex combination of circumstances. *Laus Deo!* **GPH**✘.

FROM THE PARISH LIFE COIMMITEE

New life for old cards

DO ANCIENT Christmas cards haunt your house? Do they crowd your cupboards and spill over into the basement?. And all because they are much too pretty just to throw away? Boy, have we got a deal for you!

We can take those cards and give them a new lease on life, so there's no need to feel guilty about getting rid of the things. It won't be a case of chucking them out of the house. You'll be passing them on so they can bring joy to the hearts of others.

Think of it as sharing.

We'll use your old Christmas cards to decorate the lids of the jams and jellies we make for the Cookie Walk. And there are other projects we have in mind that will benefit from the addition of pretty Christmas cards.

Bring them along to church on Sunday, or drop them off during the week. They'll find a good home.

**THE SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR
THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY**
February 1st, 2009

8.00 AM, 9.15 AM & 11.15 AM
HOLY COMMUNION
The Epistle: Roman 13:1-7
The Gospel: St. Matthew 8:1-13
FOR YOUR MORNING PRAYER
The Psalter: Psalm 66
First Lesson: Isaiah 61:1-11
Second Lesson: St. Luke 4:16-32

FROM THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPT.

Lenten Study: "Mere Christianity"

THIS YEAR'S Lenten Series will be interactive study of C.S. Lewis' thought-provoking book "Mere Christianity." The series will begin at 6.45 PM after Evening Prayer on Wednesday, March 4th, 2009, and will continue every Wednesday evening until April 1st.

We are announcing the study earlier than usual because some of you may wish to read "Mere Christianity" ahead of time. If you have already read it, why not root around your bookshelves for your copy and re-read it? It is truly one of the great Christian classics. **BROCK JOHNSON**

COLLECT FOR THE WEEK

The Conversion of St. Paul

O GOD, who through the preaching of the blessed Apostle St. Paul, hast caused the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world; Grant, we beseech thee, that we, having his wonderful conversion in remembrance, may show forth our thankfulness unto thee for the same, by following the holy doctrine which he taught; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *AMEN.*

Book of Common Prayer, Page 229

✠ **St. Stephen's Traditional** ✠
Episcopal Church

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RECTOR: The Ven. Guy P. Hawtin
ASSOCIATE RECTOR: The Rev. James V. Johnson, Jr.
VICARS: The Rev. Rhae E. Kelley, The Rev. Robert Menas & The Rev. Jonathan Filkins
ORGANIST & CHOIRMASTER: Adric
DIRECTOR OF PASTORAL CARE: Anne Hawkins (410-308-2771)
WEDDING CO-ORDINATOR: Anne Hawkins (410-308-2771)

SUNDAY SERVICES
8.00am -- Holy Communion
9.15am -- Holy Communion (Nursery & Church School)
11.15am -- Morning Prayer (Nursery)
(1st. Sun. of the month: Holy Communion at 11.15am)

WEEKDAY SERVICES
Wednesday: 6.00pm Evening Prayer
Friday: Noon: Healing Eucharist
Saturday: 5.00PM Family Eucharist.

✠ **PARISH PRAYER LIST** ✠

OUR Prayer Chain offers prayer daily for people on the Prayer List and guests of the Joseph Richey Hospice. To add a name to the list, or to the visiting list, or to join the Prayer Chain, call the office at 410 560 6776.

RECOVERY: McKayla, Rosemarie, Debbie, David, Skippy, Jack, Grace, Bob, Fran, Doris, Carolyn., Ken, Serina, Wyatt, Bobby, Alexander, Erline, Jack, Kathleen, Earle, Judy, Polly, Katherine, Helen; William, Betty, Cal, Wendell, Jack, Peggy, Linda, Millie, Dorcas, Walt., Bruce, Cienna, Tracy, Leliliah, Jennifer, Miriam, Harriet, Karen, Steve, George, Eliza, Mel, John, Randy, James, Sarah, Linda, James, Suzanne, Marian, Edith Anne, Steven, Jeanne, Betty, Judith, Angela, Tammy; Ellen, Jim, Patricia, Henry, Bonnie, Mary Ann, Robert, Christine, Ruth, Dee, Brian, Barbara, Gillian, Eileen, Matthew, George, Bryan, Jason, Jane, Joan, Frances, Mary, Ernie, Pat, Lynn, Michael, Ray, Leslie, Brandon, May, Scott, Stephen, Robert, Danny, Billy, Betty-Ann, Mildred, D'Metrius, Rachel, Laura, Stacey, Frank, Alma, Christine, John, Henry, Eric, Naomi, Pam, Betty, John, Ben, Kevin, Gwen, Elizabeth, William, Gloria, George, Lee Emily, Elsie, Bruce, Regina, Lewis, Madolin, Eudora, Carol, Bernie, Charlene, Josephine, Margaret, Mackie, Jody, Sheila, Jo Anne, Thomas, Jeanne, Sister Catherine-Grace, Mae, Marilyn, Lawrence, Rebecca, Dorothy, Joanne, Albion, Martha, Matthew, Jackie, Charles, Tony, Edward, Kim, Wendell, Vivian, Geradine, John, Maxine, Ann Sharon, Tom, Dennis, Alice & Anita.

LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE: Melba, Debbie, Phyllis, Georgetta, Carolyn, Perry, Suzanne, Tony, Robert, Doris, Drake, David, The Norris family; Gillian, Beverley, Adrienn, Jhana, Marla, Matthew, Joan, Laurie, Ellen, Lynn, Mildred, Sarah Lee, Tom, Susan, Debbie, Kathy, Owen, Douglas, Amy, Jo Anne, Mary, Gregory, Isabel, Bobby, Dorothy, Harriet, Darren, Scott, Rebecca, William, Charles, Joyce, Asfa, Eleanor, Kathy, Linda, James, Barry, Ann, Evelyn, Jeanette, Elizabeth, Virginia, Mildred, Chris, Micki, Stephen, Erik, Carol, Sandra, Elsie, Anita. Rhae, John, Robert, Mary, Michael & Loyal.

ON ACTIVE SERVICE: Alex Bursi, US. Navy; Capt. Charles Bursi & Lt. Col. Harry Hughes, U.S. Air Force; Lt. Col. R. J. Lytle & PFC Charles E. Heintz, IV, U.S. Army.

**HYMNS FOR THE FOURTH
SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY**

Sunday, February 1st, 2009

PROCESSIONAL: 532 (Langham)
Father eternal, ruler of creation

GRADUAL: 376 (Down Ampney)
Come down, O Love divine

SERMON: 517 (St. Matthew)
Thine arm, O Lord, in days of old

COMMUNION HYMN: 210 (Schmuecke Dich)
Deck thyself, my soul, with gladness

RECESSIONAL: 53 (Salzburg)
Songs of thankfulness and praise

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