

St Stephen's News

ST STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH • TIMONIUM, MARYLAND

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FROM THE RECTOR

Delta Flight 15: Out of tragedy came forth love

The Rev. Wiley Hawkes and Happy Riley forwarded me this account by a Delta Airlines flight attendant of events aboard Delta Flight 15 on September 11th, 2001. I'd like to share it with you .GPH✕

We were about 5 hours out of Frankfurt, flying over the North Atlantic. All of a sudden the curtains parted and I was told to go to the cockpit, immediately, to see the captain. As soon as I got there I noticed that the crew had that "All Business" look on their faces. The captain handed me a printed message. It was from Delta's main office in Atlanta and simply read, "All airways over the Continental United States are closed to commercial air traffic. Land ASAP at the nearest airport. Advise your destination."

No one said a word about what this could mean. We knew it was a serious situation and we needed to find terra firma quickly. The captain determined that the nearest airport was 400 miles behind us in Gander, Newfoundland. He requested approval for a route change from the Canadian traffic controller and approval was granted immediately—no questions asked. We found out later, of course, why there was no hesitation in approving our request.

While the flight crew prepared the airplane for landing, another message arrived from Atlanta telling us about some terrorist activity in the New York area. A few minutes later word came in about the hijackings.

We decided to LIE to the passengers while we were still in the air. We told them the plane had a simple instrument problem and that we needed to land at the nearest airport in Gander, Newfoundland to have it checked out. We promised to give more information after landing in Gander. There was much grumbling among the passengers, but that's nothing new! Forty minutes later, we landed in Gander . . .

There were already about 20 other airplanes on the ground from all over the world that had taken this detour on their way to the U.S. After we parked on the ramp, the captain explained the little bit we knew about the situation in the U.S. and informed the passengers that ground control in Gander told us to stay put.

The Canadian Government was in charge of our situation and no one was allowed to get off the aircraft. No one on the ground was allowed to come near any of the aircrafts . . . In the next hour Gander ended up with 53 airplanes from all over the world, 27 of which were U.S. commercial jets. Meanwhile, bits of news started to come in over the aircraft radio and for the first time we learned that airplanes were flown into the World Trade Center in New York and into the Pentagon in DC.

People were trying to use their cell phones, but were unable to connect . . . Sometime in the evening, however, the news filtered to us that the World Trade Center buildings had collapsed and that a fourth hijacking had resulted in a crash. By now the passengers were emotionally and physically exhausted, not to mention frightened, but everyone stayed amazingly calm.

We had been told earlier that they would be allowing people off the planes one plane at a time. At 6 PM, Gander airport told us that our turn to deplane would be 11 am the next morning. Passengers were not happy, but they simply resigned themselves to this news without much noise and started to prepare themselves to spend the night on the airplane.

Gander had promised us medical attention, if needed, water, and lavatory servicing. They were true to their word. Fortunately we had no medical situations to worry about. We did have a young lady who was 33 weeks into her pregnancy. We took really good care of her. The night passed without incident despite the uncomfortable sleeping arrangements.

About 10:30 on the morning of the 12th a convoy of school buses showed up. We got off the plane and were taken to the terminal where we went through Immigration and Customs and then had to register with the Red Cross.

After that we (the crew) were separated from the passengers and were taken in vans to a small hotel. We had no idea where our passengers were going. We learned from the Red Cross that the town of Gander has a population of 10,400 people and they had about 10,500 passengers to take care of from all the airplanes that were forced into Gander! We were told to just relax at the hotel and we would be contacted when the U.S. airports opened again, but not to expect that call for a while. We found out the total scope of the terror back home only after getting to our hotel and turning on the TV, 24 hours after it all started.

Meanwhile, we had lots of time on our hands and found that the people of Gander were extremely friendly. They

Parish Prayer List

Our Prayer Chain offers prayer daily for people on the Prayer List as well as the guests of the Joseph Richey Hospice. To add a name to the prayer list, or to the visiting list, or to join the Prayer Chain, ring the parish office on 410 560 6776.

FOR RECOVERY: Hilarie, Edie, Bill, Alan, Terry, Helen, Jim, Adele, Linda, John, Judy, Neal, Aida, Nathan, Hobie, Betty, Helen, Eunice, Tom, Robert, David, Jan, Susie, Sophia, Bobby, Lee, Pam, Cary, Courtney, Marie, Joanna & Finnie.

FOR LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE: Stephen, Melba, Scott, Vinnie, Doug, Ian, Lisa, Carey, Ned, Cindy, Jacob, Casey & Beth

IN MEMORIAM:

FOR THOSE WHO MOURN:

ON ACTIVE SERVICE: Lt Alex Bursi, Capt. Charles Bursi, Lt Nicholas Clouse, USN; Lt Col. Harry Hughes; Lt Cdr Emma Hawkins, RN

started calling us the "plane people." We enjoyed their hospitality, explored the town of Gander and ended up having a pretty good time.

Two days later, we got that call and were taken back to the Gander airport. Back on the plane, we were reunited with the passengers and found out what they had been doing for the past two days. What we found out was incredible.

Gander and all the surrounding communities (within about a 75 kilometer radius) had closed all high schools, meeting halls, lodges, and any other large gathering places. They converted all these facilities to mass lodging areas for all the stranded travelers. Some had cots set up, some had mats with sleeping bags and pillows set up.

"All the high school students were required to volunteer their time to take care of the "guests." Our 218 passengers ended up in a town called Lewisporte, about 45 kilometres from Gander where they were put up in a high school. If any women wanted to be in a women-only facility, that was arranged. Families were kept together. All the elderly passengers were taken to private homes . . .

Phone calls and e-mails to the U.S. and around the world were available to everyone once a day. During the day,

passengers were offered "Excursion" trips. Some people went on boat cruises of the lakes and harbors. Some went for hikes in the local forests. Local bakeries stayed open to make fresh bread for the guests. Food was prepared by all the residents and brought to the schools. People were driven to restaurants of their choice and offered wonderful meals. Everyone was given tokens for local laundry mats to wash their clothes, since luggage was still on the aircraft. In other words, every single need was met for those stranded travelers . . .

Finally, when they were told that U.S. airports had reopened, they were delivered to the airport right on time and without a single passenger missing or late . . . When passengers came on board, it was like they had been on a cruise. Everyone knew each other by name. They were swapping stories of their stay, impressing each other with who had the better time. Our flight back to Atlanta looked like a chartered party flight. The crew just stayed out of their way. It was mind-boggling.

And then a very unusual thing happened. One of our passengers approached me and asked if he could make an announcement over the PA system. We never, ever allow that. However, this time was different. I said "of course" and handed him the mike. He picked up the PA and reminded everyone about what they had just gone through in the last few days. He reminded them of the hospitality they had received at the hands of total strangers. He continued by

saying that he would like to do something in return for the good folks of Lewisporte.

He said he was going to set up a Trust Fund under the name of DELTA 15 (our flight number). The purpose of the trust fund is to provide college scholarships for the high school students of Lewisporte. He asked for donations of any amount from his fellow travelers. When the paper with donations got back to us with the amounts, names, phone numbers and addresses, the total was for more than \$14,000!

The gentleman, an MD from Virginia, promised to match the donations and to start the administrative work on the scholarship. He also said that he would forward this proposal to Delta Corporate and ask them to donate as well. As I write this account, the trust fund is at more than \$1.5 million and has assisted 134 students in college education . . .

In spite of all the rotten things we see going on in today's world, this story confirms that there are still a lot of good and Godly people in the world and when things get bad, they will come forward. God Bless America ...and the Canadians!

FROM THE PASTORAL CARE TEAM

Steve Jones' Requiem Eucharist

Long time parishioner Steve Jones passed away suddenly in May. The Health Information Privacy Act prevented us from learning of his death until late last month. Please join us to bid him farewell at a Requiem Eucharist at 10.00 AM on Monday, September 26th.

St Stephen's Anglican Church

11856 Mays Chapel Road, Timonium, MD 21093

Office: 410 560 6776 · **Rectory:** 410 665 1278

Pastoral Care: 410 252 8674

www.ststeve.com

The Ven. Canon Guy P Hawtin, *Rector*

The Ven. Michael Kerouac, *Vicar* · The Rev. Michael Belt,
The Rev. John Novicki, The Rev. Robert Ludwig, *Associate Rectors*

The Rev. M Wiley Hawks, *Pastoral Care Chaplain*
Mrs Happy Riley, *Director of Pastoral Care & Wedding Coordinator*

SUNDAY SERVICES

8am: Said Eucharist

9.15am: Choral Eucharist (with Nursery & Church School)

11am: Choral Mattins (1st Sunday: Sung Eucharist)

6pm: Choral Evensong (as announced) –
evensong.ststeve.com

WEEKDAY SERVICES

Wednesday, 6pm: Evening Prayer

Friday, 12 noon: Healing Eucharist

Saturday, 5pm: Family Eucharist

Calendar of Events

WEEKLY

Monday, 6.30pm: Bridge Club

Tuesday, 7am: Fellowship Breakfast (Nautilus Diner)

Thursday, 10am: Knitting Circle

Friday, 10.30am: Bible Study

MONTHLY & SPECIAL

Ladies Who Lunch

Wednesday, September 21st, 12.00 PM

Pappas Restaurant & Sports Bar

The Diocesan Synod

October 4th to October 7th

Trafalgar Day Tea

Thursday, October 8th, 2.00 PM

Parish Life Committee

Tuesday, October 10th, 7.00 PM

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

St Stephens' Anglican Church
11856 Mays Chapel Road
Timonium, MD 21093

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